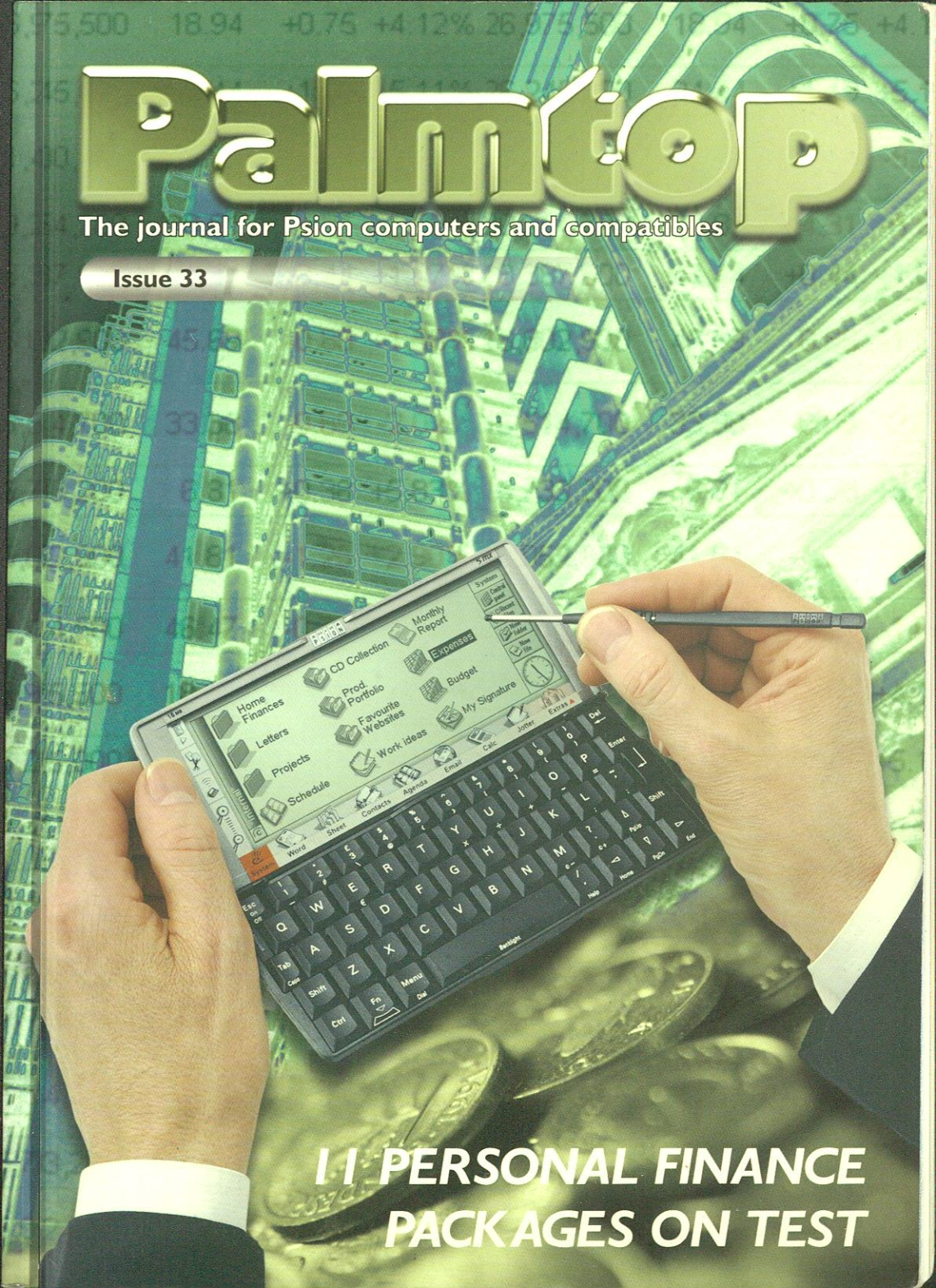
Palmtop

The journal for Psion computers and compatibles

Issue 33



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Psion Revo Plus	£235
Psion Series 7	£539

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With your Psion, you thought you had the ultimate gadget — here's your chance to gain another!

Radio Controlled Projection Clock
This 100% accurate, radio controlled alarm clock projects the time on the wall or the ceiling. So it's ideal for spectacle wearers. Neatly styled, it has a two-line display for time and date, plus a second time Zone.
There's an 8-minute snooze function, plus two independent crescendo alarms.

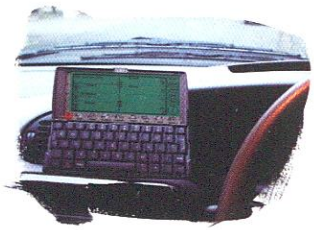
The Weather WALL Clock
Giving a large clear digital display, this stylish wall clock gives all the information you could possibly need.. Not only does it display the time, it also gives the date and month, the room temperature and a graphic illustration of the predicted weather for the next 12 hours using its in-built pressure trends barometer. An alarm is also included.

Digital deluxe Weather Station
With its 7-line, LCD display, this ultimate unit gives you the weather forecast; indoor and outdoor temperature, plus trend indication; relative humidity, comfort indicator; current barometric pressure, plus readings for the last 24 hours; current phase of the moon; as well as the date and time, together with an alarm. Supplied with one state-of-the-art remote temperature sensor unit, the weather station can be table or wall mounted.

Docking Station for the 5mx/mc218
Simple docking to a PC whilst providing mains power. Holds machine securely on your desk - just £25 plus VAT

visit our web site!! www.clove.co.uk

Car Stand and Car Mains Unit for the Series 5/mx
Allows the Series 5/mx/MC218 to be held at a good (adjustable) working angle for use in the car. It has a cut out for connection for a car mains unit (why not order both together) and GPS cables.



Psion Series 7 Car Adaptor
We now have a car vehicle adaptor for the Series 7, the first available. This is a must for Series 7 users, as, of course, it recharges the battery at the same time, just in case you didn't!

We have moved!!

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Palmtop

The journal for Psion computers and compatibles

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(Volume 6, issue 3)

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EDITORIAL

Psion has been dealt something of a body blow with Motorola's recent pullout from their next generation Odin Quartz-based communicator project, as reported on page 4.

What was initially hailed by the popular press as a tragedy for Psion is probably less significant than one might imagine in the grand scheme of Symbian computing. Rather than causing Psion to abandon the project entirely, they have simply rescheduled it, and any resulting drop in the immediate impetus for Odin will mean an increase in their allocation of resources for other projects that have been running alongside it.

From Motorola's viewpoint, this was one of no fewer than 30 projects to have been axed following their disappointing fourth quarter results, and is indicative of broad-based cuts within the company rather than an underlying lack of confidence in EPOC-based devices in general. Indeed, Motorola is now planning to focus on development of a Symbian-based multifunctional smartphone for release sometime next year.

The biggest concern with this setback is one of timing. Things will really be hotting up in the world of palmtops and mobile communicators this year, with exciting new products due from a number of competing manufacturers. This puts Psion against fierce competition to come up with some significant new product developments as soon as humanly possible, just to keep up with everyone else.

For a company that already comes under criticism for its dearth of new product releases in recent years, Psion really has its work cut out to pull out all the stops and bring some genuinely innovative ER6 products to market by the end of this year—preferably sooner.

Steve Clack - March 2001

Palmtop is...

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Steve Litchfield - Sub-Editor

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John Woodthorpe - Senior Contributor

Thanks... to all the other contributors whose names appear within Palmtop and those who have kindly supplied products for evaluation.

EPOC cartoons - Carl Reader

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NEWSREEL

What's new in the world of EPOC

Motorola pulls out of Psion deal

Codenamed 'Odin', the GPRS smartphone that was being developed jointly by Psion Computers and Motorola for launch this summer has been hit by a setback. Motorola has pulled out of this and at least 30 other projects as part of streamlining moves within the company.

Unlike the recently announced Nokia 9210 (see Newsreel, issue 32), Odin is thought to be based on Symbian's Quartz reference design (see issue 29's 'The Quartz Crystal Ball'), featuring the functionality of both a keyboardless EPOC handheld and a GSM/GPRS mobile phone.

Psion is intending to complete development of Odin but estimate that it may not see the light of day until next year. Motorola in turn are concentrating all their efforts on their own Symbian smartphone, for release later in 2002.

Psion's CEO David Levin said "I'm pretty disappointed about this, to put it mildly. This is important for us."

As part of the terms agreed between Psion and Motorola to terminate the agreement, Motorola will waive repayment of US$7m already paid to Psion and will shortly make an additional payment of US$1m.

www.psion.com

Siemens joins Symbian

The mobile phone giant Siemens has selected Symbian to 'power its next generation of Smartphones'. Siemens recently became the second largest phone manufacturer in Europe.

No specific products or timescales were given at this time.

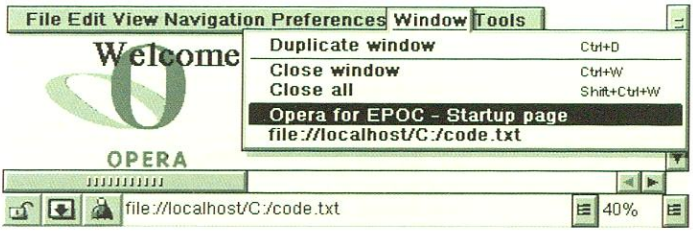
www.symbian.com

Psion finance

Psion Computers has estimated the impact of the discontinuation of the joint development with Motorola to be a reduction in its 2001 pre-tax profits of approximately £12m.

2000 was a good year for Psion Computers, which shipped over half a million palmtop units, a 65% increase over 1999.

www.psion.com



Opera 5 on the Revo

Opera version 5

The developers of the popular Opera web browser have released the first beta version of the next-generation version 5. Opera 5.02 for EPOC Beta 1:

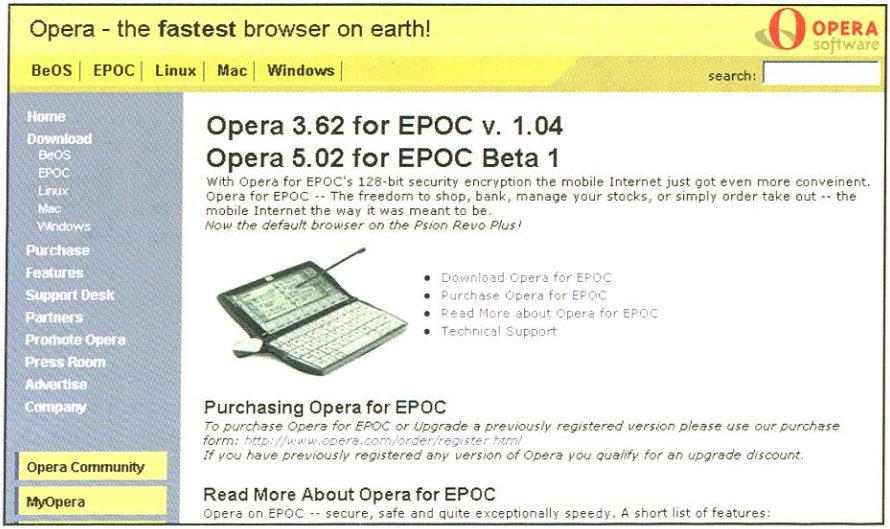
- Now supports HTML 4.0.
- Includes CSS level 2 support and an experimental Document Object Model.
- Now supports Javascript 1.3 extensions.
- Now has multiple window support via a new 'Window' menu.
- Now has a new bookmark manager.

If the above means little to you or if you don't feel 100% confident trying out beta (pre-release) software, then we'd advise you to wait for the full release version. If you do decide to go ahead with the v5.02 beta, note that any existing Opera v3.62 bookmarks will be deleted upon installation.

www.opera.com/epoc

Symbian at 3GSM

The recent 3GSM World Congress concentrated on "uniting the key players in the wireless industry in order to propel second and third Generation GSM Systems into the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Press Room
Advertise
Company
Opera Community
MyOpera
Opera 3.62 for EPOC v. 1.04
Opera 5.02 for EPOC Beta 1
With Opera for EPOC's 128-bit security encryption the mobile Internet just got even more conveinent. Opera for EPOC -- The freedom to shop, bank, manage your stocks, or simply order take out -- the mobile Internet the way it was meant to be.
Now the default browser on the Psion Revo Plus!
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To purchase Opera for EPOC or Upgrade a previously registered version please use our purchase form: http://www.opera.com/order/register.html
If you have previously registered any version of Opera you qualify for an upgrade discount.
Read More About Opera for EPOC
Opera on EPOC -- secure, safe and quite exceptionally speedy. A short list of features:

future". Symbian had a definite presence at the event, with CEO Colly Myers joining other top wireless industry executives on a panel entitled 'Driving Lifestyle Usage through Useable, Innovative Terminals'.

www.3gsmworldcongress.com

AOL on a Psion?

AOL is extending its 'AOL Anywhere' strategy to users of Psion palmtops and will develop versions of its email and instant messaging applications for the Symbian platform. Under the terms of the agreement between AOL and Psion, the latter will bundle AOL's applications with future Revo and Series 5mx products.

www.psion.com

QuickConnect

Trivanti, the joint venture between Psion and United News & Media to provide mobile internet services, has launched a new service which cuts the connection time associated with accessing WAP from a mobile device in the UK. QuickConnect has its own local rate phone number and specialised settings, dramatically reducing the connection time required to log on to the Internet and access a WAP service, from around 25 seconds to just eight seconds. The reduction is achieved by using an ISDN connection over the GSM network. The half-minute delay inherent in current GSM Internet connections has been highlighted as one of the key factors stopping mass market adoption of WAP services.

The URL quoted below contains all the detailed setup instructions needed, nominally for the Psion Revo but also valid for the Series 5mx.

www.trivanti.com/psionrevo.html

More printer drivers

The prolific Andrew Johnson has again stepped in where Psion fears to tread, with yet more new printer drivers for EPOC:

- New version 1.07 of the Canon BJC-80 printer driver for ER3 and ER5, significantly speeding up colour graphics printing.
- An untested add-on for US-model ESC/P2 printers that have TrueType fonts built-in, a PDR file that makes use of this font technology.
- An experimental Canon eXtended Mode driver for real Canon BJC printers only. This driver uses the EPOC bitmap fonts to produce the output page and can thus be used to print documents in landscape mode.

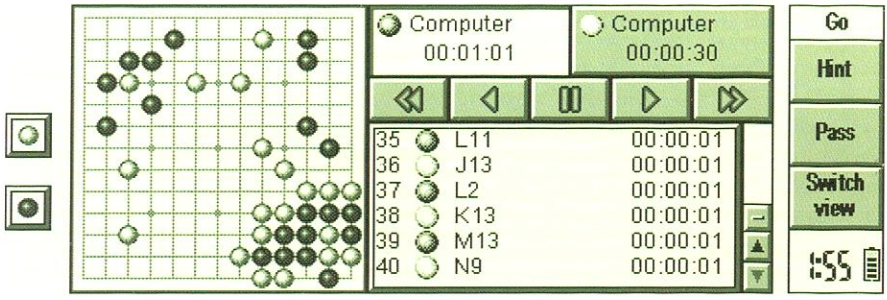
www.aps.anl.gov/~anj/bjc80

CodeWarrior arrives

Metrowerks and Symbian have signed an agreement under which the former will deliver a complete set of CodeWarrior software development tools for Symbian. This system is the market leader for Palm OS and it's claimed that a Symbian version will make it easier for programmers to produce quality applications.

The first CodeWarrior products for Symbian will consist of Java development tools and are scheduled to be available in June this year, with C++ following in due course.

www.symbian.com



Go Go Go!

Purple Software has released a new, commercial (£40, by electronic download) version of Go, one of the oldest board games in existence. Go is a fighting game played between two armies, where the board represents the uninhabited world bounded by the sea. The aim of the game is to acquire territory by surrounding vacant areas of the board with your armies, or stones, thus scoring more points than your opponent. There are three board sizes to choose from and a variety of skill levels.

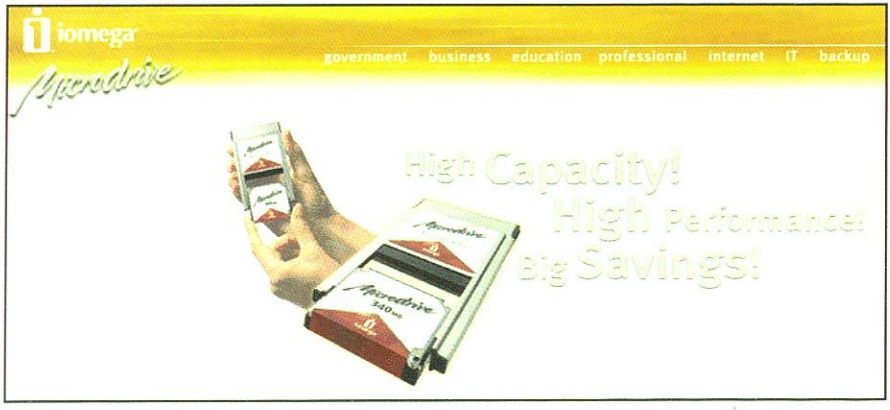
Purple has also announced two much simpler commercial games, 4-in-a-line and Gomoku, both of which are £15, again by electronic download only. Both are similar and involve making lines of pieces, four or five strong.

www.purplesoft.com

Iomega microdrives

The maker of the popular Clik, Zip and Jaz storage disks has announced its own, rebadged versions of the two IBM CompactFlash type II Microdrives, reviewed in issue 28. There's nothing new, other than the colour scheme, but the agreement should help Microdrive sales worldwide.

www.iomega.com



The Series 3mx returns...

Long-time Psion repairers and general service centre, POS (Pinnock Organiser Services) has announced stocks of the Psion Series 3mx, discontinued by Psion well over a year ago. This palmtop is still much sought after by enthusiasts as it has all the power of the Series 3 range with three times the normal processor speed. An optional connectivity kit includes cable and PsiWin 2.3. POS are offering the 3mx from £145.

www.posltd.com

New 10-game pack

Epocware continue to produce software at a prodigious rate, the latest being the 10-game 'Logic & Card Games pack', which sells for $20 by electronic download. Although none of the games have many frills, there's certainly variety and you can't fault the value-for-money factor.

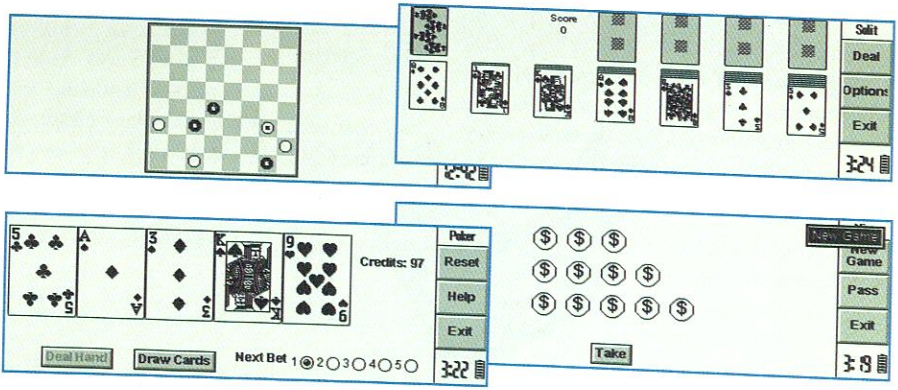
The pack includes Checkers (a.k.a. Draughts, which plays quite a strong game), Give Away (like Checkers but in reverse!), Reversi (the classic strategy game), Poker (video poker, not the multi-player card game), Solitaire, Nim, 15 (a tile-shuffling puzzle), Miner (a.k.a. Minesweeper or Bombs), Lines and Cascade (very similar to the game built into the Revo).

www.epocware.com

Still waiting for PsiWin 2.3.2

Psion has still not given a firm release delete for their long-awaited PsiWin 2.3.2 update. The full release is now slated for March/ April, but in the meantime an 'Open candidate' is available for download (25MB) from Psion's web site. The final release version will also appear on subsequent pressings of the Palmtop CD.

www.psion.com/downloads



INDUSTRY NEWS

In this regular feature we devote a single page to what's happening in the non-EPOC sector of mobile computing...

Although Palm retains the highest market share of the mobile handheld computing market, they refuse to rest on their laurels. One of Palm's latest strategies is to port its operating system to an ARM processor. This will enhance the speed of devices using the Palm platform.

The company has also released a beta copy of Palm OS 4.0 to developers. Palm's strategy includes moving away from the production of simple palm-sized devices and towards developing multi-functional handheld computers. In preparation for this, the new OS will support a wide range of technologies, including Bluetooth, networking, USB and 16-bit colour.

Palm has also collaborated with Delphi Automotive Systems to introduce the Mobile Productivity Centre, an in-car device that allows drivers access to the Internet and to download and reply to email using voice commands.

Handspring, manufacturer of the popular Visor range, has recently acquired Bluelark Systems, a developer of handheld web browsing systems. The deal, worth an estimated $16 million in stock, will eventually allow easier Internet access for the Handspring range.

Two new wireless Pocket PCs are soon to be launched. The WA3050 is the result of a joint venture between Microsoft and Sagem. The new device is a dual-band GSM/GPRS mobile phone. Included are some advanced mobile communication features, including the ability to use the device as a fully functional mobile phone with both hands-free and speakerphone options. WAP connectivity is possible via the bundled Pocket version of Internet Explorer. The second wireless device to hit the streets will be Casio's new Cassiopeia E-707, to be launched in Europe next year.

Finally, Xircom is to update the popular Rex 5000 mini PDA. The Rex 6000 is a credit card-sized device with a touch sensitive screen and 2MB of memory. Other features include a calendar, contacts list and the ability to access the Internet, albeit only via the Rex.net portal.

Andy Nott

Shareware Shorts

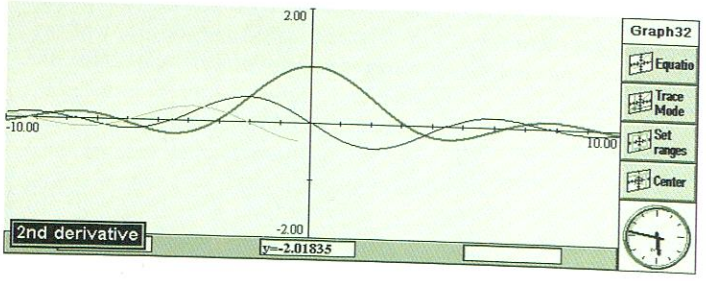
Steve Litchfield, maintainer of the Palmtop/3-Lib CD-ROM, takes a look at the latest additions to the world of shareware...

You have to wonder sometimes whether some people actually read the 100 or so pages that plop through their front door every two months. Three years after the introduction of the Series 5 and at least two after the standardisation of the Psion world on the SIS format for installing applications, we still get long-time subscribers emailing us to ask what they should do with an SIS file they've just downloaded.

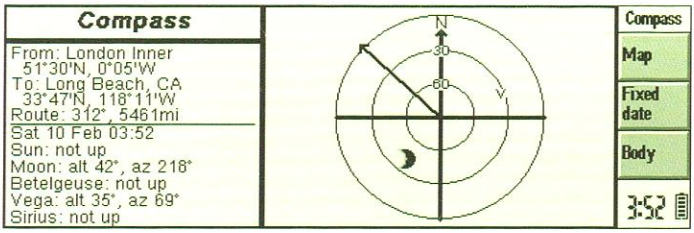
If, in the process of downloading and trying to install all the programs mentioned in these pages, you should find yourself out of ideas as to how to proceed, please make sure you've at least glanced through a handful of back issues. In particular, read through our 'What is shareware?' page in each issue, 'Installing software—the easy way' in issue 21, and the various helpful questions and answers in each issue in the Q&A section. Chances are that you'll either find a direct solution to your problem or at least be inspired to try another tack.

Graph32

This is a comprehensive shareware graph plotter from **FreEPOC**, though nothing to do with displaying numbers that you already possess—that's Sheet's domain, of course. Graph32 is aimed at mathematicians and physicists who need to explore how specific functions relate to each other and generally behave. Although based heavily on conven-



Graph32—the definitive graphing tool



Aligning with the heavenlies in Compass

tional 'Cartesian' (x and y) axes, Graph32 can overplot curves for polar or parametric functions. Calculators are built-in for tangents and first and second derivatives. As with any good mathematical application, you can solve quadratic and simultaneous equations. There's some fabulously detailed online help, spoiled only by a number of careless spelling mistakes.

www.freepoc.de

Compass

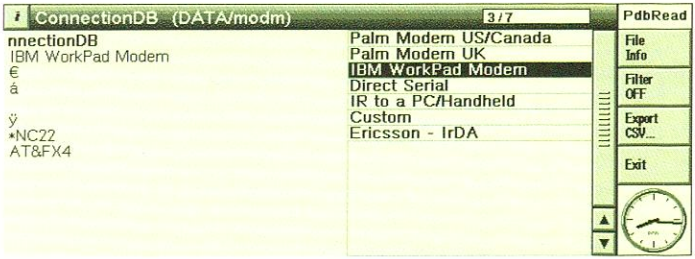
Compass is a shareware direction finding program, from **Aron Landy**. Essentially, you tell the program where you are and it displays a compass rose showing the current positions of the sun, moon and three bright stars (provided they are above the horizon). Thus simply lining up the Psion with the heavenly bodies will tell you which way is North. In addition to this core feature, Compass can calculate great circles (shortest distances around the earth's curvature) to any chosen destination, showing the journey on the Psion's world map. Unless you're an airline pilot, this feature is likely to be of use only if you need to know the direction of some important place (e.g. Mecca).

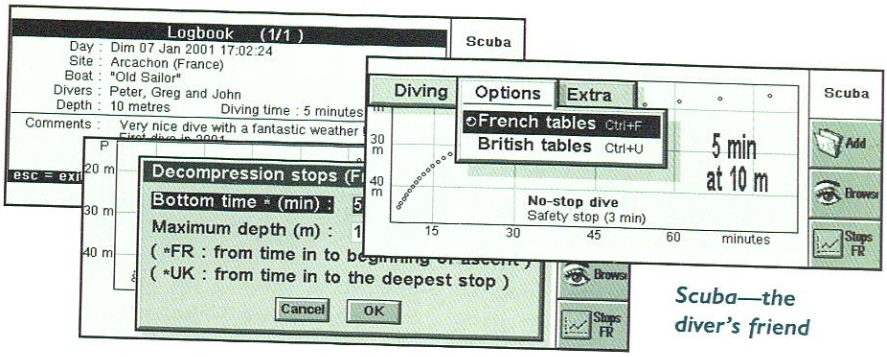
www.aronlandy.com

PdbRead

Shane McKee's freeware PdbRead has been designed to give you the ability to read all the most common Palm OS database formats, including HanDBase, JFile, ListDB and MobileDB. In the same manner as PocketInfo for Psion, only on a much larger scale, there are thousands of databases of useful information listed on the Internet (e.g. *www.memoware.com*). In particular, there are a lot of medical files, which is where Shane and his Palmaris software house come in. PdbRead offers a good combined card/list view, can filter entries according to a search string of your choice and can

Browse Palm databases on a Psion with PdbRead





Scuba—the diver's friend

export to CSV format, for re-import of entries into Data.

www.palmaris.com

Scuba

Working only on the Revo, Series 7 or netBook (and, strangely, not on the 5mx), **Jean-Yves Pontailler**'s freeware Scuba is a more-or-less direct port of the popular Series 3 version. It calculates decompression time for scuba divers, making use of British BS-AC 88 or French MN 90 tables. The maximum depth is limited to 45 metres and the diving time is limited to 99 minutes. The program does not support repetitive diving but there's a Data-compatible built-in diving logbook.

p.pellot.free.fr

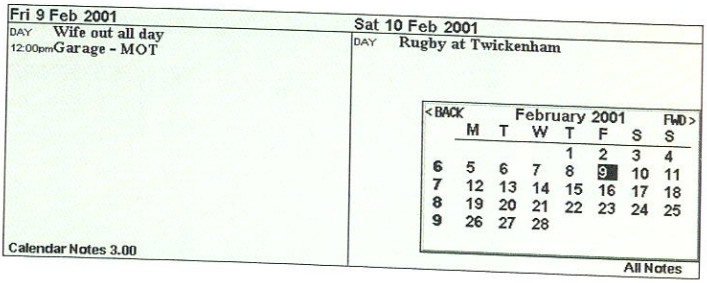
Calendar

Aimed at people who 'don't require the complexity of Agenda', this is a simple replacement tool, freeware from **Philip Bister**. Tapping on a date and pressing [Enter] or starting to type is sufficient to create a new day note and there are basic categories, including 'To-do', 'Reminder' and 'Timed entry'. It's all rather basic though, with a very underdeveloped interface.

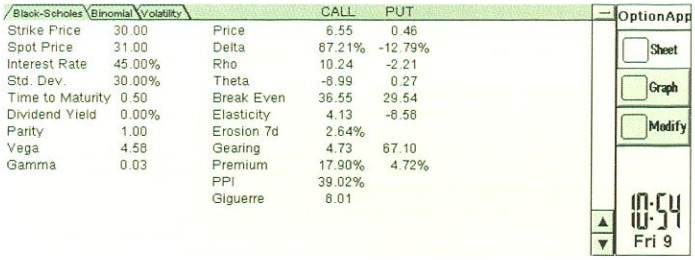
Available on Palmtop CD15 onwards

OptionApp

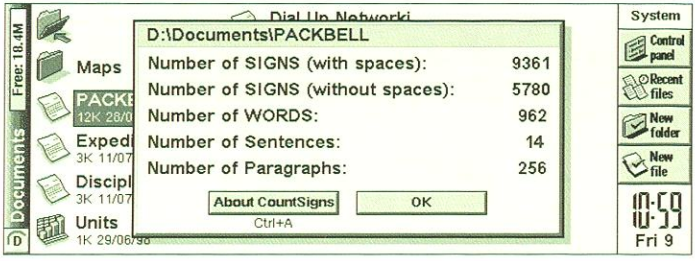
A very specialist financial tool for those involved with stocks and shares, this implements the Black-Scholes formula for Put and Call options with a dividend and the Binomial algorithm for American and European options without dividend. **Yves Coene**'s



Small and simple (perhaps too much so)—Calendar



Confused? I was! OptionApp



CountSigns at work

freeware tool calculates price, premium, delta, gamma, theta, vega, gearing and many other parameters and allows you to depict the results graphically.

Email: yves.coene@homemail.com

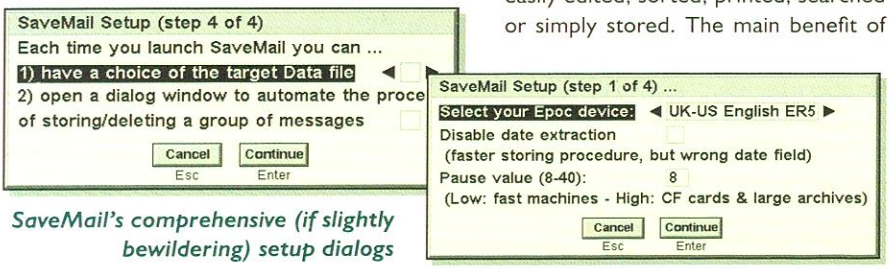
CountSigns

This freeware utility from **PocketIQ** is designed with the writer and journalist in mind. It will count 'signs' (text, spaces and punctuation), words, sentences and paragraphs in any open or closed EPOC Word file. If run while a Word file is already open the utility will count the signs in that document, otherwise a dialog is shown to allow document selection.

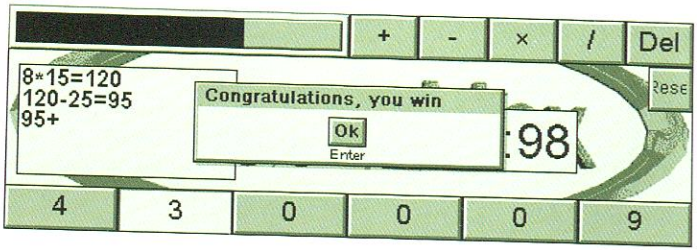
www.pocketiq.com

SaveMail

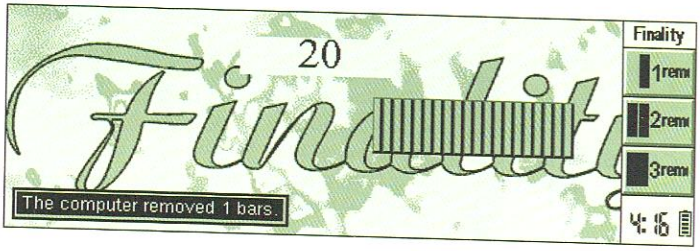
Sergio Alisi's freeware SaveMail is a Macro5-based utility to automate the process of copying your messages from ER5's built-in Email application to any number of 'preformatted' Psion Data files (e.g. one for 'Work' and another for 'Home'), or to a 'plain' Psion Word document, where they can be easily edited, sorted, printed, searched or simply stored. The main benefit of


SaveMail Setup (step 4 of 4)
Each time you launch SaveMail you can ...
1) have a choice of the target Data file
2) open a dialog window to automate the proce
of storing/deleting a group of messages
Cancel
Esc
Continue
Enter
SaveMail Setup (step 1 of 4) ...
Select your Epoc device: ◀ UK-US English ER5 ▶
Disable date extraction
(faster storing procedure, but wrong date field)
Pause value (8-40): 8
(Low: fast machines - High: CF cards & large archives)
Cancel
Esc
Continue
Enter

SaveMail's comprehensive (if slightly bewildering) setup dialogs



Keeping your mental maths polished with Neuromax



Don't take the last bar!— Finality

this is to speed up the Psion Email application, which gets notoriously slow when it has to work with many messages (especially if stored on a CF disk). Once messages have been selected and SaveMail invoked, the utility takes over your palmtop, driving Email and Data (or Word) to copy and paste text in the required formats, the process taking 10 seconds or so.

www.geocities.com/siliconvalley/bridge/1492

NeuroMax

UK residents will probably know of the Countdown gameshow, in which numbered rounds see contestants trying to combine random sets of likely numbers to achieve a particular target, using standard mathematical operators (+, -, x and ÷). **Jean-Baptiste Lernout** has used this as the basis for a gripping little shareware game, with a similar time element to the original. One little quirk that's required by the conversion onto a computer format is that the subtotal after each calculation has to be selected manually, in case you need to do several sets of intermediate calculations, combining their results.

www.jblernout.fr.st

Finality

Also from **Jean-Baptiste Lernout** is this, simpler, logic puzzle. The aim is to take away groups of one, two or three bars from the playing surface. The object is to let the computer remove the last bar, which is trickier than it looks.

www.jblernout.fr.st

tdOxo3d

The latest in **Trevor Mendham**'s EPOC strategy games, tdOxo3d is a competent implementation of Noughts and Crosses in three dimensions on a 4x4 grid. The game's hard enough to play on the 'Push-over' level, which is just as well as all the more advanced levels are held back until

FEATURED UPDATE!

Solun

Billed as the 'Pocket Planetarium', **Dave Rushall**'s Solun has been massively updated recently, now standing at version 5.1

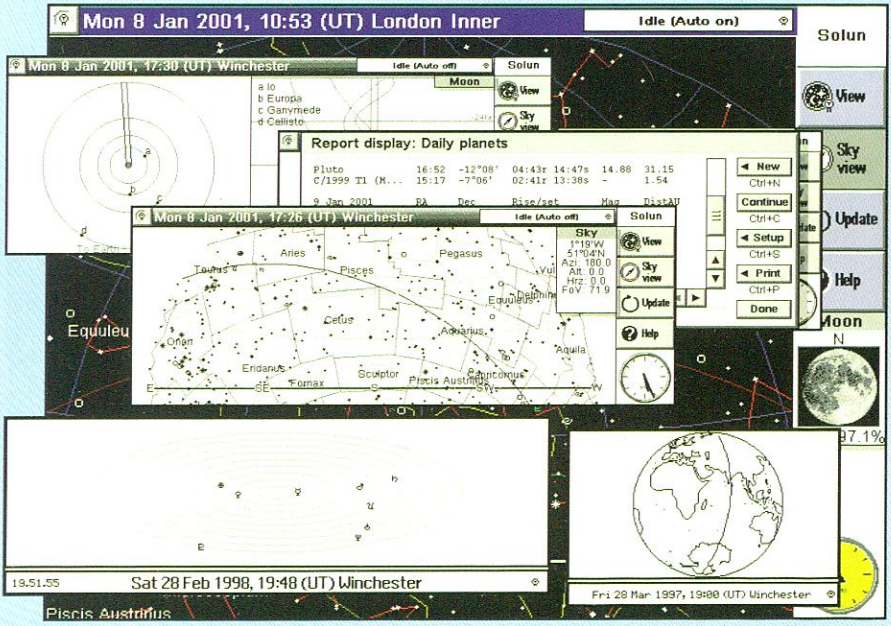
Maybe you're interested in astronomy or would just like to know a little about it? Have you ever wondered what that bright star is or how to see the moons of Jupiter? Do you fancy a spot of stargazing while out and about? Then Solun will fit the bill nicely. It's effectively free too, though you are encouraged to make a donation to the charity of your choice.

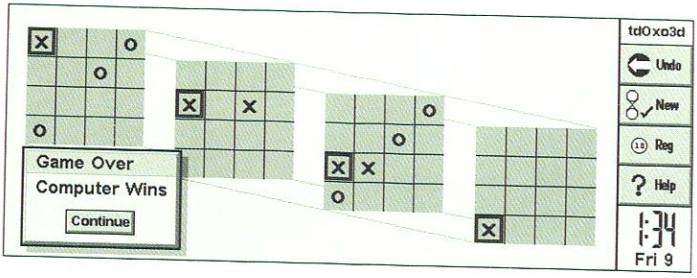
Its main features include:

- Planetarium and star atlas displays.
- Azimuthal projection, with up to 5000 stars.
- 3D orrery Solar System display.
- Views of Galilean moons of Jupiter and rings of Saturn.
- Day/night world map displays.
- Textual report generator.
- Comet orbit calculator.

In the last few months, Solun's author has added full colour support for the Series 7, a new document-based settings system, background star chart plotting, the 3D orrery, built-in constellation labels, improved search dialogs, a side view of Saturn's rings and a revised and more concise Help file.

www.freepoc.org





tdOxo3d will test your brain power

the game is registered. A surprisingly brain-stretching diversion.

www.tendan.com

pgLines

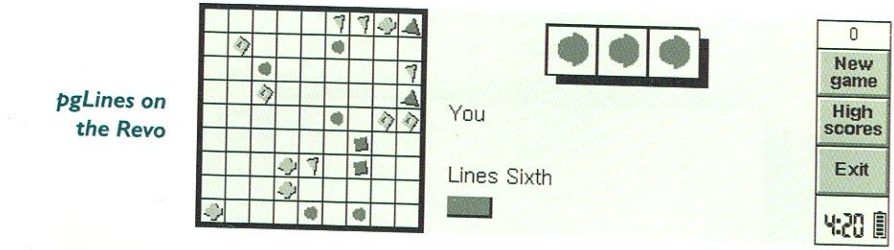
New from **Psion Games** is this novel shareware strategy game. The aim is to align five or more pieces of the same shape into a single row and they will disappear, leaving place for new ones. A display on the right side of the screen shows pieces which are about to drop out and the game finishes when there's no space left on the board.

www.psion-games.com

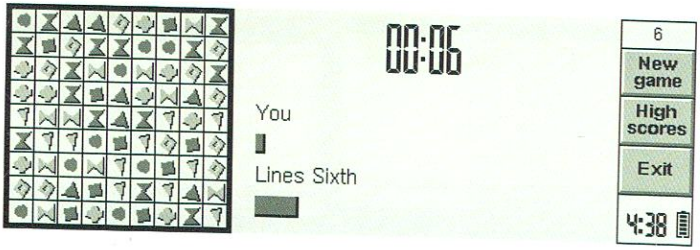
pgBalls

Along similar lines is **Psion Games**' other newcomer, pgBalls. Although the board looks much the same as pgLines, the object is to find and swap figures from neighbouring cells to create a straight vertical or horizontal line of three or more figures of the same shape. When you create a line, it vanishes away from the board, increasing your score. The figures that were above then fall down, filling free space. A timing element adds extra spice.

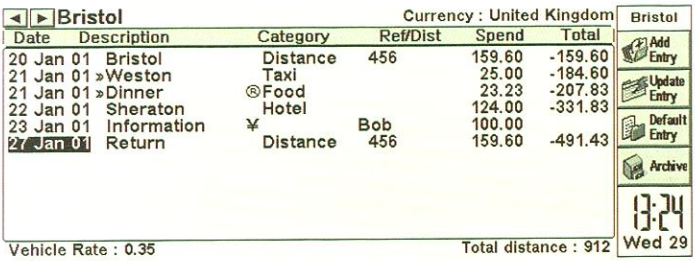
www.psion-games.com



pgLines on the Revo



pgLines' stablemate, pgBalls


Bristol
Currency : United Kingdom
Date Description Category Ref/Dist Spend Total
20 Jan 01 Bristol Distance 456 159.60 -159.60
21 Jan 01 »Weston Taxi 25.00 -184.60
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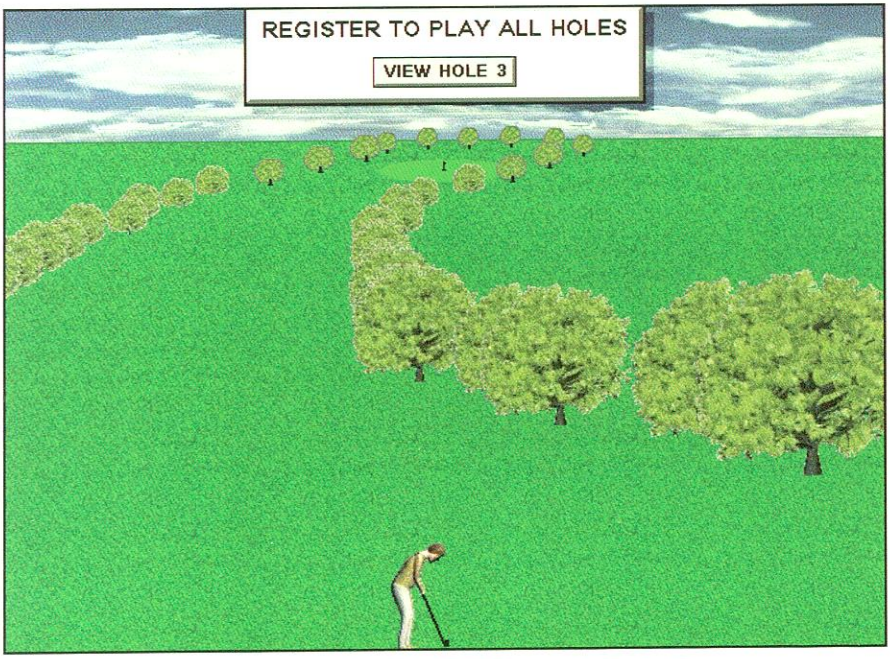
22 Jan 01 Sheraton Hotel 124.00 -331.83
23 Jan 01 Information ¥ Bob 100.00
27 Jan 01 Return Distance 456 159.60 -491.43
Vehicle Rate : 0.35
Total distance : 912
Bristol
Add Entry
Update Entry
Default Entry
Archive
13:24
Wed 29

Manage your business expense account with RMRExpense

RMRExpense

The prolific **RMR Software** has finally produced a standalone version of the Expenses module from RMRBank. RMRExpense allows you to keep track of multiple expense accounts. You can create multiple trips, defining them with an optional allowance, vehicle rate and operating currency. You can define categories for meals, train, taxi, etc., as needed. In particular, you can directly enter the mileage of company car journeys, and the expense amount is automatically calculated from the vehicle rate. Default entries can be defined for regularly made expenses. The program also allows entry in foreign currencies, with conversion to the defined trip currency. You



Simple but colourful—Golf-Pro on the Series 7

can then reconcile and/or underline entries when expenses are reclaimed and export the entries to a text file for importing into a spreadsheet or word processor.

www.rmrsoft.com

Golf-Pro

An interesting new game is **Ben Vaughan**'s Golf-Pro, which has the distinction over my own Fairway (Series 5 Golf) of being available for the large, colour screen of the Series 7 and netBook. The basic physics behind the game are good enough, as are the graphics and sound, but it's arguably let down by the design of the holes, which give away the author's penchant for puzzle (rather than arcade) games and resemble maze levels more than a golf links.

www.bjv.btinternet.co.uk

Dino-Zone

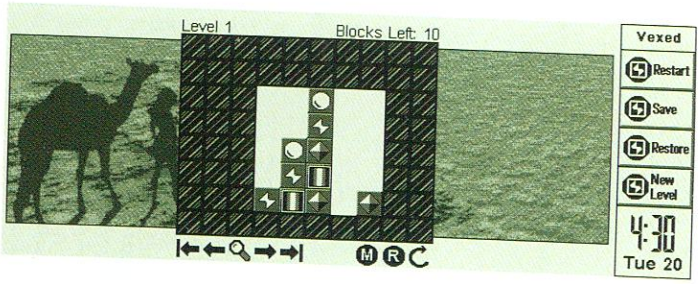
Also from **Ben Vaughan** is this maze-based puzzle. The idea is to traverse level after level, shooting and evading monsters and collecting vital energy crystals with which to power your spacecraft and escape. The program makes use of colour on the Series 7/netBook, though the graphics are quite rudimentary.

www.bjv.btinternet.co.uk

Vexed

Although at heart just a 'simple' block-based puzzle, **Ewan Spence** has put in enough forethought and originality to make this an absorbing game. Whenever two or more blocks of the same kind get together they disappear, and all are affected by gravity. This makes it something of a nightmare to shuffle them around to make sure that the disappearances happen in the right sequence to remove every block from the level. A novel 'map' screen shows progress so far and there are some cute sound effects.

www.freepoc.de



Getting Vexed? An absorbing puzzle game from Ewan Spence

What is shareware?

Written by professional programmers and enthusiasts, shareware is often supplied for use on a 30 day trial basis. If you like the software you are then asked to send a payment to the author. Some programs are freeware and don't require any payment at all. Each program comes complete with information about how to install and use it, and how to pay for it.

Where can I find it?

One way to get any of these programs is from the Internet. If you've got access to the web then there are several on-line indices (e.g. at *www.epocsoftware.com*) which link directly to the relevant author download page concerned. Things are just as easy if you haven't got Internet access: as long as the program has been out for a few months, you should find a copy on the latest edition of the Palmtop CD-ROM, indexed into the appropriate category.

How do I use it?

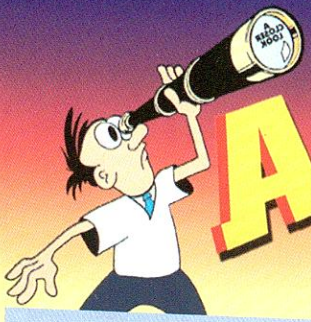
Once you've found the file you want, there are three steps you may need to take:

1. Decompress the file, if necessary. Most applications on our Palmtop CD will already have been decompressed for you, but those on the Internet will almost certainly be 'zipped', to save bandwidth. If you've never seen a ZIP file before, install an unzipping utility onto your desktop or palmtop computer. For PC users, the most common is WinZIP (which can be found on most PC magazine CD cover disks); for Macintosh users, try ZipIt; for EPOC itself, get RMRZip (from *www.rmrsoft.com*). Once installed, you can double-click on any downloaded ZIP file and it will be automatically expanded into its component parts.
2. Examine the files available. Most programs come with a welcoming README.TXT file, which you can read in any text editor or word processor. This should explain how to install the application and how to register it. Sometimes the latter is described inside the program's help screens instead. Well-behaved EPOC applications come as one or more SIS files, e.g. 'mygame.sis'. These can be double-clicked on to install them directly using a serial (PsiWin) link to your palmtop. If you experience problems at this stage, it's worth noting that you can also copy SIS files onto your palmtop and double-tap on them there instead, from the System screen.
3. The newly installed program will automatically appear on the Extras bar. Press the 'Extras' application icon to check and to launch the software.

Shareware availability

Please note that, by definition, many of the latest items featured in Shareware Shorts will *not* appear on existing Palmtop CDs, but on subsequent pressings of the disk. If you wish to receive every edition of the CD then see page 138 for details. To find the latest version of the programs mentioned here, go to the relevant author's web site as given in the text.

As mentioned elsewhere in the article, the vast majority of EPOC applications mentioned in Shareware Shorts run properly on the Psion Series 7/netBook, Series 5/5mx, Revo/Diamond Mako and compatibles, unless otherwise stated. If a program misbehaves on *your* EPOC computer, check the author's web site first and then email them if necessary.



A Closer Look

...at some of the newest and most interesting products for your palmtop

Star Ratings:

★★★★★ Excellent
★★★★☆ Good
★★★☆☆ Average
★★☆☆☆ Fair
★☆☆☆☆ Poor
☆☆☆☆☆ Dismal

Interpreting reviews

Quality: the *Quality* star rating reflects how well the product works, whether it includes all the features you'd expect, whether the interface is consistent and easy to use, and in data-based software products it also reflects the quality of the information contained in the program.

Value: the *Value* star rating reflects the value for money of the product, taken within the context of what the program (or other product) does. Therefore a simple utility program will be rated differently to a sophisticated application at the same price.

Does it work on my palmtop?

Items reviewed should work with the Psion Revo and Revo Plus/Diamond Mako, Series 5/5mx, Series 7/netBook and Ericsson MC218 unless otherwise specified, though some programs may not currently support colour or utilise the full screen size of the Series 7 and netBook.

Programs *may* run on the Oregon Scientific Osaris, though part of the display may be clipped due to the Osaris' smaller 320x200 pixel screen. Osaris users should always consult the program developer before purchasing.

ZIP Manager 21
Assistant 23
DCP 26
NotePlan 29
MeetingManager 32
POD car power supplies 34
Revo case roundup 35
Series 5/5mx docking station 38

ZIP Manager

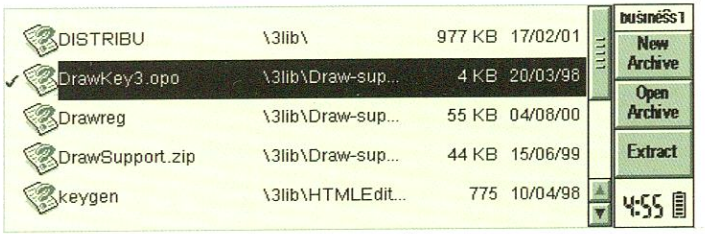
Psion die-hards may remember the first few years of the Series 3 range, when there was a near passionate need for a ZIP utility, something to unzip program archives downloaded from the Internet and zip up sets of files on the palmtop. When a usable program finally arrived, it was virtually certain of huge acclaim (and sales). S3Zip became PsiZip, then S5Zip and finally RMRZip (apologies if I've missed a few other name changes along the way), but all by the same author, Serge Chestopalov, and sold as shareware for $25.

A few other well-meaning utilities have tried to encroach on this market leader, with varying success. Purple Software's Navigator was notable for its desktop-like treatment of ZIP files as folders, with a high degree of intuition but with its multi-window interface rather hampered on the palmtop's tiny screen.

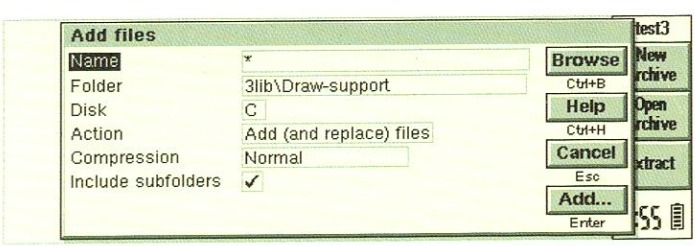
Nearly four years after RMRZip and Navigator's appearance, along comes ZIP Manager with (unfortunately) little new to recommend itself. As with other Epocware programs, the interface is Spartan, to say the least (no graphics, no progress bars, only two zoom settings, etc.), but then at least you can console yourself with the fact that the programmers haven't been wasting their time and your money on flashy splash screens that serve little purpose.

ZIP Manager's operation is excellent, as you'd expect from Epocware's tight coding, with my tests proving it to be around 15% faster than RMRZip and slightly more efficient at creating ZIP archives (1% smaller). All the common ZIP actions are represented here (Add, Delete, Extract), though some of the more obscure ones (Test archive, Archive and File comments) sadly aren't.

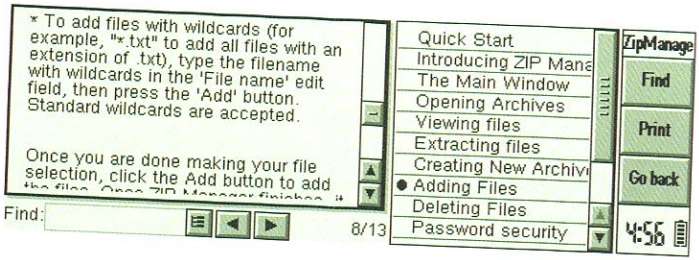
As with RMRZip, pressing [Enter] on an archive component opens it up in the appropriate application, automatically detecting when you've finished with the item and



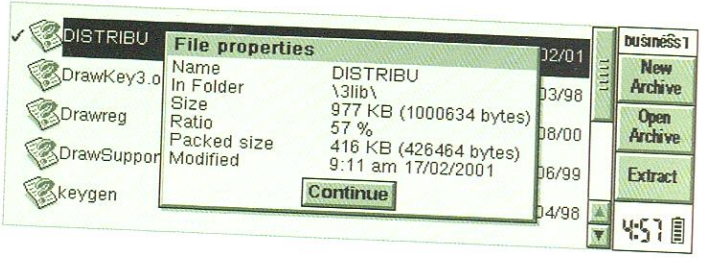
With an open ZIP archive



Adding files to an archive


* To add files with wildcards (for example, "*.txt" to add all files with an extension of .txt), type the filename with wildcards in the 'File name' edit field, then press the 'Add' button. Standard wildcards are accepted.
Once you are done making your file selection, click the Add button to add
Find:
8/13
Quick Start
Introducing ZIP Mana
The Main Window
Opening Archives
Viewing files
Extracting files
Creating New Archiv
Adding Files
Deleting Files
Password security
ZipManage
Find
Print
Go back
4:56

The excellent Help file



Examining an item's properties, including compressed size

bringing ZIP Manager back to the foreground so that you can pick up where you left off.

Password protection has been implemented rather awkwardly via a menu command that seems like an afterthought. 'Set password' has to be manually remembered and activated before adding any files to an archive—RMRZip includes security in the main 'Add file' dialog, which is far more intuitive.

If you were tempted by our issue 32 review of Smart Find, ZIP Manager will immediately make a lot of sense, as Epocware is bundling these two plus their Recycle Bin and Restart utilities into a package called 'Essential System Tools', for the rather good price of $30.

Seen standalone though, ZIP Manager comes on the scene rather late in the day, with only a $5 price difference and its extra turn of speed to recommend it to EPOC power users.

Steve Litchfield

ZIP Manager

From: Epocware (www.epocware.com)

Availability: Now (English/German)

Price: $20 (shareware)

Quality ★★★★☆

Value ★★★½☆

Assistant

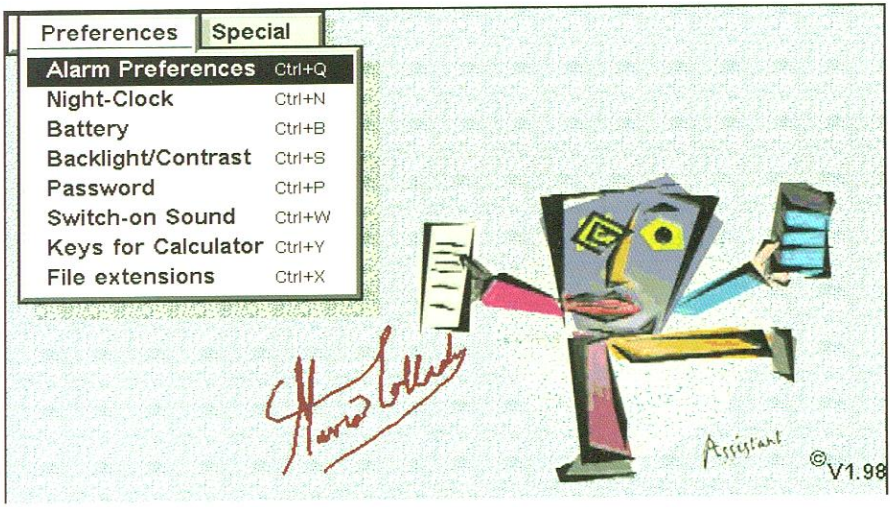
The world of EPOC is full of utilities that try to change the way you control your palmtop. Seemingly falling into two main categories, some try to replace the System screen completely and change both the look of the machine as well as how you interact with it. Prime examples in this category are Purple Software's Navigator and PocketIQ's DCP (see page 26). Others recognise that many people prefer the original EPOC System screen (and dislike turning their palmtop into a Windows PC clone), offering enhancements that work in harmony alongside it. The latter category is typified by ExtraBars, Macro5 and, as reviewed here, Assistant.

Loading up Assistant yields a configuration screen with a background Picasso-like self portrait of the program author, and a series of preference menus. As well as selecting the behaviour of alarms, warnings, backlight, clock displays, and so on, there are also settings for access to Macros, a whole host of hotkeys, and much more.

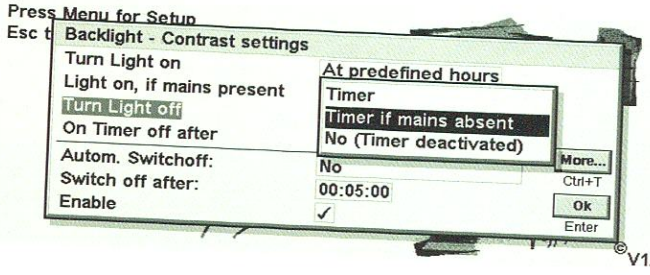
It pays to read the Help file to understand the power of some of these functions. They range from relatively simple things such as setting the backlight to come on under various circumstances, through to sophisticated options allowing macros to run when switching the machine on, or when starting or closing Assistant.

This power extends even further with the availability of 50 hotkeys that can be used to run a macro, application or specific file, open a folder, perform a keystroke combination, insert a cliptext of up to 255 characters or run an Assistant function.

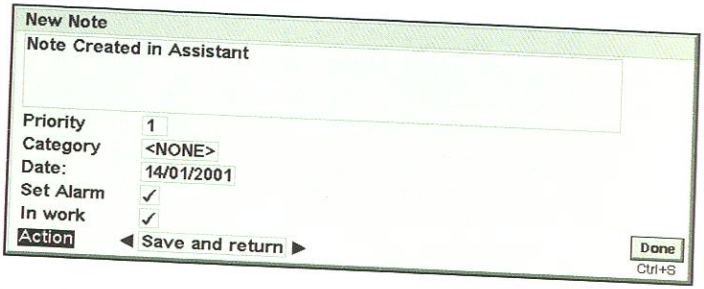
The range of Assistant functions is large, covering most of the existing features of the EPOC System screen and Control panel. These can also be accessed from a special pop-up panel (which is itself turned on by



The Assistant configuration screen, as it appears on the Series 7 and netBook



Enhanced backlight control

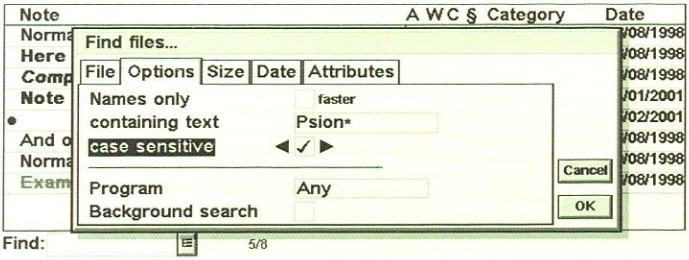


Creating a note within Assistant

setting up yet another configuration option). If you recognise the panel's icons, a single tap will launch the function you want, otherwise the arrow keys can be used to scroll around the panel, whereupon a short reminder of the function appears at the bottom left hand corner of the screen.

The 36 Assistant functions range from controlling the Remote link and playing sound files to launching an impressive file search facility and creating quick notes. These notes are put into a Data file and can have an alarm associated with them, functionality that's implemented via a series of macro-like operations that run when

The selection panel for Assistant's many functions



Searching for a file

the note has been entered. It is initially a little disconcerting to see things happening rapidly in various windows as entries are pasted into the Data file, but it works fine in practice. The file search facility will find files with specific names or containing specific text, and is a very useful addition to the basic search facility built into ER5.

Macros have already been covered extensively in Palmtop and are perhaps the major reason for someone being interested in Assistant, which can handle both the Macro5 variety and the Escript macros from ExtraBars.

The flexibility of being able to use macros really opens things up when combined with the extra functionality of cliptexts, Assistant's built-in functions and hotkeys. If you're a macro user and you don't have Assistant installed, you're probably missing out. If you've never really felt comfortable with macros, there's still plenty to look at in Assistant.

My main criticism is that Assistant is both complex and sophisticated and it takes a lot of effort to get the best out of it. The default configuration (sensibly) has a lot of the sophistication turned off, but this isn't made as clear as it could be, causing beginners to wonder why the application doesn't behave exactly as described in the Help file.

Anyone willing to invest a little time in getting to grips with Assistant will be very well rewarded.

John Woodthorpe

Assistant

From: Mario Collado (www.psionwelt.de/MarioCollado)

Availability: Now (English/German)

Price: £12 (shareware)

Quality ★★★★☆

Value ★★★★☆

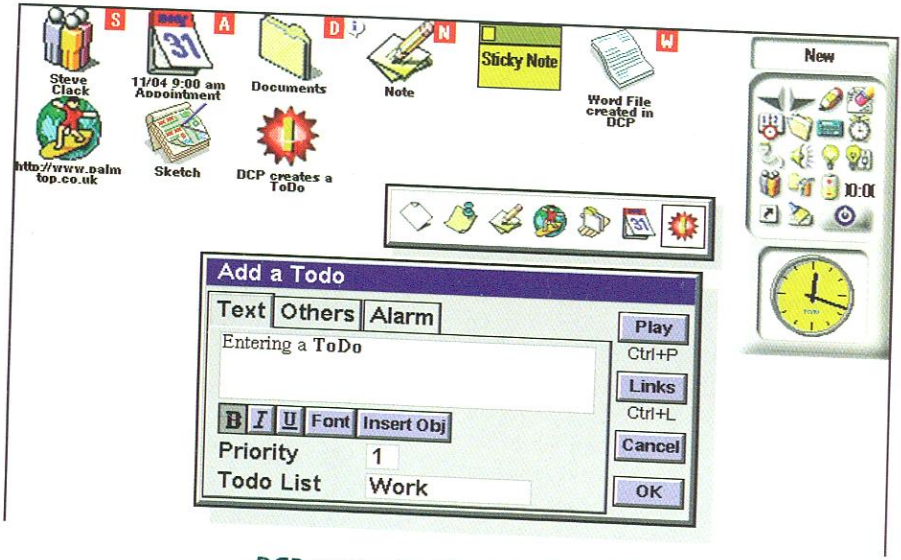
DCP

DCP is designed to extend and enhance the way the built-in EPOC software works. DCP replaces the System screen with its own view of the palmtop while still allowing access to all the key features. For example, it will let you check the battery status, control the backlight, and so on. Sometimes it simply presents the same information you would get from the System screen, but mostly it changes the appearance and the degree of control that you have over that information.

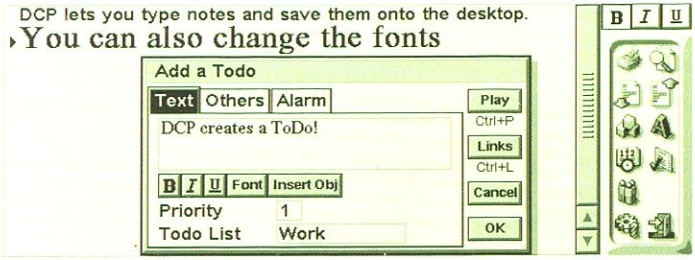
DCP stands for 'Desktops and Control Panel', which encapsulates its main aim very well. A series of virtual desktops can be created at will and configured to act as workspaces for different purposes. There's also a graphical control panel that gives quick access to many of the same features that are in the DCP menu, allowing you to decide whether you want to do everything from the control panel, from the menu, or by using keystrokes.

DCP takes quite a bit of getting into, as it has many features that aren't covered at all in the rather limited help file. I initially downloaded a copy from the main PocketIQ web site and the lack of information there meant that it took me rather longer than I'd anticipated to understand what DCP could actually do. If it wasn't for the fact that I had to review it, I might have given up trying.

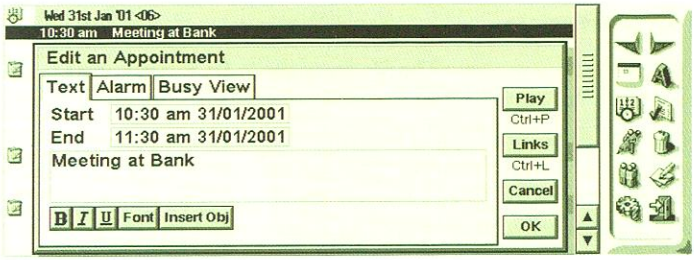
The author's own web site at *corisoft.free.fr* has a detailed tutorial and a manual, and these make things a great deal clearer. They refer to older versions and so the screenshots are not always accurate, but they do help in understanding what the program is all about. DCP is developing far faster than its documentation at the moment, which can be potentially confusing for new users.



DCP running in colour on a Series 7



Building a To-do into a DCP note



DCP links directly to Agenda

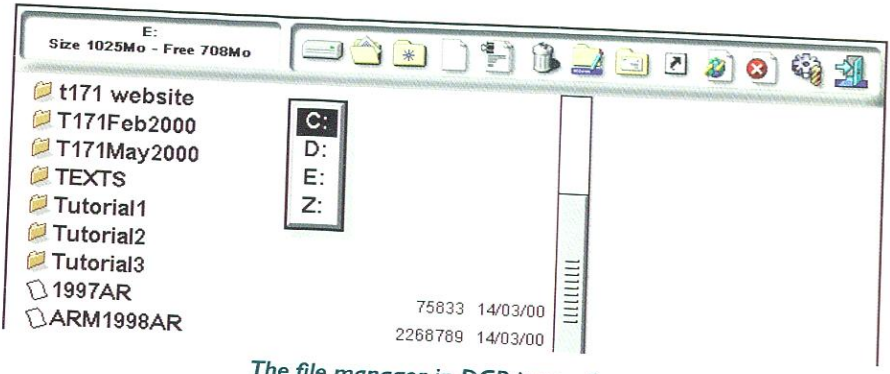
A lot of effort has gone into DCP's graphical interface. This is evident on the monochrome Psions but even more striking on the colour Series 7 and netBook. Despite the graphical sophistication, DCP runs extremely quickly when installed on the internal drive, but slows up a little when run from a CompactFlash card.

The DCP desktop is initially blank apart from the standard DCP control panel. Adding shortcuts is very easy, either from the menu or by using the shortcut (arrow) icon on the control panel. These shortcuts can be to applications, folders, files, URLs, entries in Contacts, and so on. They can also be to To-do items, appointments, 'sticky notes' and new files created on the DCP desktop. There's enough here to provide almost any combination of information and file access, and each shortcut can be run by tapping on it or by using an assigned hotkey. With 26 hotkeys available per desktop, this gives a lot of control and flexibility.

Viewing and editing Contacts and Agenda files initially sounds something of an overkill, but it makes a great deal of sense to be able to integrate such fundamental data into the rest of your work on the DCP desktop.

Other major features include a task manager and a file manager. These work very well, and are better and faster than the standard Psion ones in many ways. The file manager loads up very quickly and gives an attractive display. The absence of labels on the icons is a handicap though, and I still find that I use the menu most of the time in case I end up doing something I didn't intend.

One problem with DCP's graphical interface is that the little icons are just too small to hit with a fingernail, meaning that you have to take time to extract and use the stylus every time. In addition, there's the learning curve while you gradually discover what all the tiny pictures mean—as there's not enough guidance to make these immediately obvious.



The file manager in DCP is very fast

There are a few other niggles related to the interface as well. For example, DCP allows the clock to be switched between digital and analogue forms in the same way as the EPOC System screen, but it doesn't save this state on exit, so you have to change it back manually every time if you prefer the analogue display.

The unregistered version is limited to 15 shortcuts, but otherwise seems to be unrestricted and without nag screens.

This is a very professional application with a huge range of features. If you already use similar accessibility utilities on your desktop computer, you'll probably love the way that DCP allows you to work in the same way on your palmtop. Even if you've never got on with the idea of multiple virtual desktops, there's still enough in DCP to make it worth looking at.

John Woodthorpe

DCP

From: PocketIQ (www.pocketiq.com)

Availability: Now (various languages)

Price: £18 (shareware)

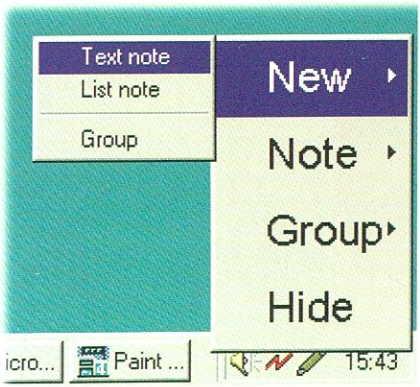
Quality ★★★★☆

Value ★★★★☆

NotePlan

New from PalmTec is this multi-platform note-taking tool, totally synchronized and (in theory) extremely useful. Unprecedented in the EPOC world, the NotePlan system not only doesn't rely on PsiWin but it won't in fact work at all if either PsiWin is active on the PC or the Remote link is activated on the palmtop. Given some of the problems people experience with PsiWin, this has got my attention already.

There's nothing truly groundbreaking about a properly synchronized set of notes, though. Owners of Palm organisers have been enjoying exactly this for years, with Memo Pad notes built into their Palm Desktop. They simply paste (or type) in notes on any subject, on either desktop or handheld, relying on the synchronization process to make sure the information is kept identical and current, whichever of the two platforms they happen to be using at the time. With suitable categorisation or grouping, the system can then act as a very flexible and totally portable information store.



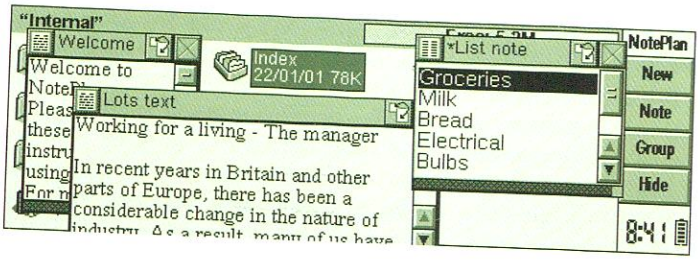
Clicking on the NotePlan icon in Windows for the first time...

Note takers and jotters are two-a-penny for EPOC, of course. And the same for Windows. But this is the very first time that someone has made the effort to create the same software to work on both. In fact, PalmTec's intention is to port NotePlan to several other platforms, including Macintosh, Palm OS and Pocket PC. That's for the future though—here I've been looking at version 2 for EPOC and version 1 for Windows.

Installation is quick and easy via PsiWin, but then this has to be turned off (by right clicking on the PsiWin 'wiggly line'). Similarly, the Remote link has to be set to 'Off' on the palmtop. Synchronization is started by right clicking on the NotePlan icon in the Windows system tray and selecting 'Synchronise', then using an equivalent menu command in NotePlan on the palmtop. A moment or two of hesitation and then the actual transfer of data in both directions happens in a flash. At the beginning, there's only a small 'Welcome' note, but even with a substantial set of text notes in the database, synchronization took only a few seconds at most, performing faultlessly throughout the test period.

The notes themselves can be of two types, text or list. As you'd expect from the names, 'text' simply means a freeform text window into which you can type as much or as little text as you wish. The standard Cut, Copy and Paste commands and shortcuts work on both EPOC and Windows versions, making it easy to grab snippets from emails or the web, pasting them into a note in your new information store.

'List' notes are simple text lines, kept as separate entities and with a degree of auto-formatting, in that at delete time a simple



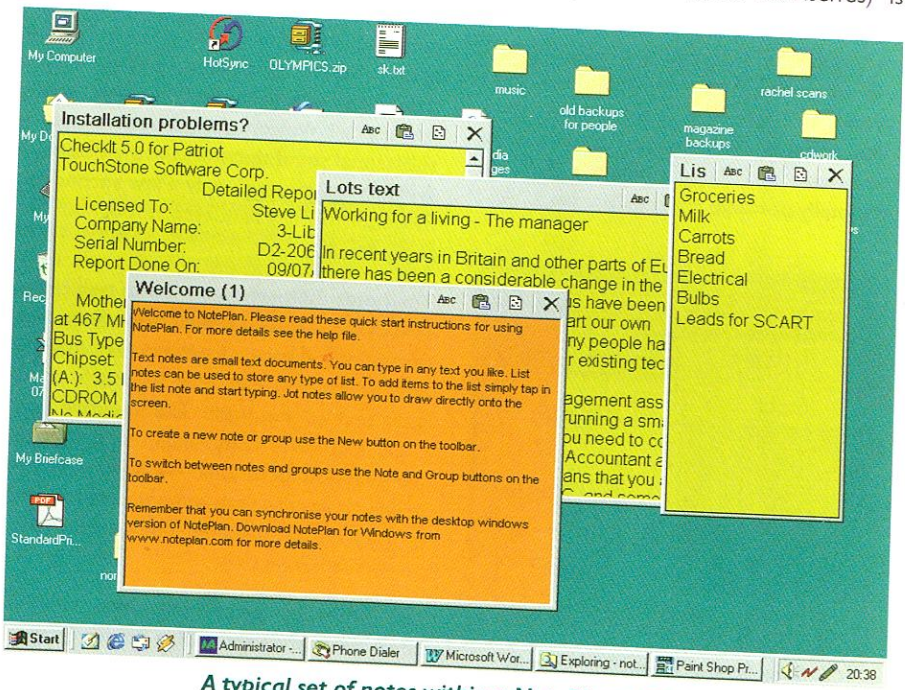
NotePlan on the Revo, showing the synchronized data

press of the [Del] key is enough to remove each item. This makes them ideal for shopping lists and so forth.

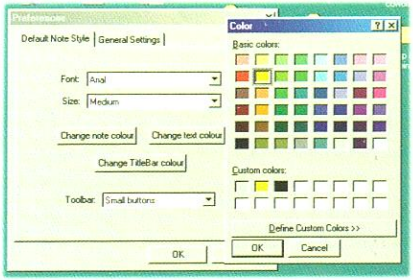
In fact, there's a third type of note, a 'jot' note, essentially a little Sketch-like window into which you can scribble a name or number, or simply doodle away. Unfortunately, this note type is only supported on the EPOC version, making it of limited use in the NotePlan 'system'.

The EPOC application uses a 'transparent' metaphor, with foreground toolbar and floating note windows (with your previous application or System screen in the background). Each note window is easily resized, maximised or hidden with a tap of the stylus, and the look and feel of NotePlan is very slick indeed.

Probably the most important NotePlan feature (after the notes themselves) is


My Computer
HotSync
OLYMPICS.zip
sk.txt
music
old backups for people
magazine backups
rachel scans
Installation problems?
CheckIt 5.0 for Patriot
TouchStone Software Corp.
Licensed To:
Company Name:
Serial Number:
Report Done On:
Lots text
Working for a living - The manager
In recent years in Britain and other parts of Eu
there has been a considerable change in the
Welcome (1)
Welcome to NotePlan. Please read these quick start instructions for using NotePlan. For more details see the help file.
Text notes are small text documents. You can type in any text you like. List notes can be used to store any type of list. To add items to the list simply tap in the list note and start typing. Jot notes allow you to draw directly onto the screen.
To create a new note or group use the New button on the toolbar.
To switch between notes and groups use the Note and Group buttons on the toolbar.
Remember that you can synchronise your notes with the desktop windows version of NotePlan. Download NotePlan for Windows from www.noteplan.com for more details.
Groceries
Milk
Carrots
Bread
Electrical
Bulbs
Leads for SCART
My Briefcase
Start
Administrator -...
Phone Dialer
Microsoft Wor...
Exploring - not...
Paint Shop Pr...
20:38

A typical set of notes within a NotePlan group



Changing the default note colour in Windows

'Group'. Once you get beyond your first half-dozen notes, some kind of organisation becomes essential. By creating groups and moving notes into them, you can keep sets of notes grouped logically together.

Back on the Windows desktop, all the same functions are available, though accessed either via the NotePlan tray icon or via buttons on the note windows themselves. It's all very solid, and reasonably polished, without ever feeling as though it's going to follow many Windows conventions. Three text fonts, three text sizes, background colour and button appearance can all be chosen on a general (default) or individual note basis, which is a nice touch, though you can't set default styles for each group.

On both platforms, a configurable hotkey switches to NotePlan and (when pressed again) hides it once more, making for a very fast means to switch your NotePlan desktop on and off. Notes are saved every time you synchronize, of course, but I'd recommend using the manual 'Save' command regularly on either version right after entering anything of significance, as NotePlan doesn't save alterations automatically as you go.

Alas, it's at this point that EPOC drops a huge fly in the NotePlan ointment. With any realistic number of text notes of useful size, things rather grind to a halt at the Psion end. For example, with only four text notes (of around 2K each) in a group, switching to them from another group took a massive 10 seconds. For a quick-access informational tool, this is almost certainly going to be a problem. The developers claim that the slowness is within EPOC's own text and window handling code, so let's hope they find a workaround.

In addition to some kind of synchronization for jot notes, I would like to have seen provision for password protection for notes—registration codes and account details are just two of the confidential data types that it would be handy to keep within NotePlan. It was also a little inconvenient to have to keep remembering to turn the Psion's Remote link off every time I wanted to synchronize—other applications with similar requirements seem able to do this automatically.

Both clients (EPOC and Windows) have to be registered separately, which makes buying a working system somewhat expensive, but at least they're shareware and can be properly evaluated for two weeks before you have to get your credit card out.

Steve Litchfield

NotePlan

From: PalmTec (see page 122)

Availability: Now (English)

Price: £15 EPOC/ £15 Windows (shareware)

Quality ★★★☆☆

Value ★★½☆☆

MeetingManager

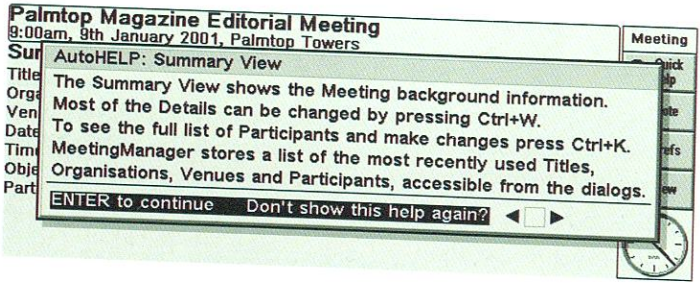
No matter what you do, it seems almost impossible to get away from meetings. Whether they are concerned with planning, reviewing, presenting, selling or reporting, it's natural to want to make your Psion work for you.

You can obviously use the built-in Agenda to schedule and plan meetings and to record the resulting actions, although a fair amount of view-hopping will be needed and you have to do everything manually. If you spend a lot of time in meetings, it would be useful to have as much of this work done for you as possible, with everything done within a single interface and the ability to produce an easily created list of the actions agreed. This is the aim of MeetingManager.

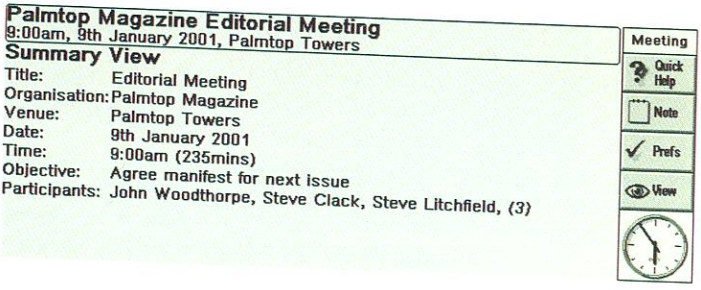
Supplied by electronic download, unfortunattely with no evaluation or demo version avaialble, you get a single SIS file and a manual (in RTF format, for reading on the desktop or converting over to the Psion). MeetingManager also includes an innovative 'Quick Help' feature that provides instant, context-sensitive help when you change views. This can be turned off once you're familiar with the application's features, though it's always available from a button on the toolbar. Normally I like to have a decent manual, and indeed the supplied document is fine, but MeetingManager does such a good job of guiding you that it's hardly necessary to use it.

There is a degree of integration with Agenda, in that actions can be synchronized with an Agenda file to produce To-do entries, but apart from this MeetingManager is a standalone application that does exactly what its name implies.

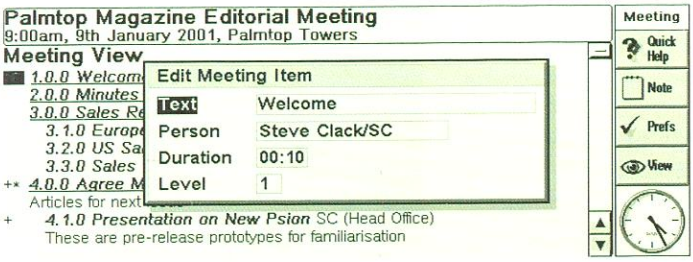
Common items such as venue, meeting title, participants, and so on, are remembered for future use, and there's a range of font styles already defined. Once the preferred formats have been established they can be


Palmtop Magazine Editorial Meeting
9:00am, 9th January 2001, Palmtop Towers
Meeting
AutoHELP: Summary View
The Summary View shows the Meeting background information.
Most of the Details can be changed by pressing Ctrl+W.
To see the full list of Participants and make changes press Ctrl+K.
MeetingManager stores a list of the most recently used Titles,
Organisations, Venues and Participants, accessible from the dialogs.
ENTER to continue
Don't show this help again?

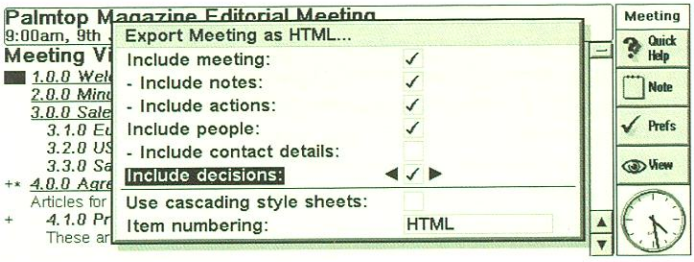
Quick Help guides you through



The summary view of a meeting



Editing the agenda for a meeting



Setting up to export in HTML format

saved as templates and reused. Details can also be imported from previously saved MeetingManager files to speed the setup of new meeting records.

To illustrate MeetingManager's use, I've set up an example based on a totally fictional meeting. One disappointment when creating this was that the details for each participant had to be entered directly rather than read in from the Contacts database. This is a minor inconvenience though, as the ability to recall them means that they only have to be entered once.

As a meeting proceeds, you can set alarms to sound when the time allocated for each item on the agenda is up. Even more useful is the facility to make notes of up to 240 characters long on the discussion, and to record actions of up to 192 characters. These are indicated on the Meeting view by the '+' and '*' symbols respectively, as shown in the screenshots above. It would

Alternatively...

There are a lot of ways of achieving many of the same results, but all of them take more effort than MeetingManager. For example, the ability to embed files into Agenda entries allows Word, Sheet and even Record files to be used to provide a complete record of a meeting and its actions. It's not so easy to pass all this on to other participants though, especially if they aren't fellow Psion users.

Other multi-purpose utilities can be used in a similar way. Notepad Deluxe, Macro5 and RMRTask all spring to mind, among others, but none are as convenient as having everything in one package, as with MeetingManager.

have been useful to be able to make longer notes at times, or perhaps to embed a Word or Sheet file, but sadly this isn't possible, probably because it would render MeetingManager's export feature impossible, which outputs a report in text or HTML format.

Ideally, all participants would have a Psion and their own copy of MeetingManager. This would allow the report file to be emailed to everyone before the meeting, completed during it and the resulting minutes beamed to everyone when it finishes. If you're the only one with MeetingManager, then its ability to produce both HTML and text reports means that they can be incorporated into other documents if necessary and processed further.

For me, the final master touch in MeetingManager was the ability to synchronize the meeting actions with Agenda, exporting them as To-do entries. This can either be done for all the actions, or just for your own. If other participants have Psion palmtops then beaming them copies of their actions will make sure they don't forget.

John Woodthorpe

MeetingManager

From: Estuary Technologies (see page 132)

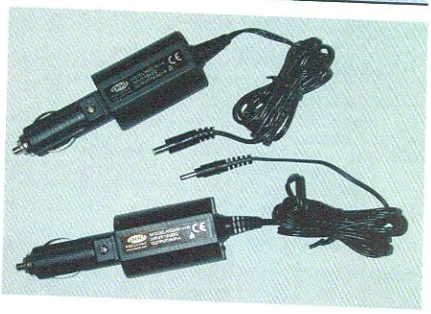
Availability: Now (English)

Price: $50 (around £30)

Quality ★★★★☆

Value ★★★☆☆

POD car power supplies



There's not too much to say about an in-car power adaptor for your Psion, but given that Psion's only offering is a £30 unit for the Revo, it's worth shopping around for alternatives. POD Ltd (see ad on page 130) has two car adaptors available: one for the Series 5/5mx and Revo models at £17, and another for the Series 7 and netBook, at £29. Both are supplied with a standard cigarette lighter plug and a generous cable length of around 1.8 metres, with a green LED to confirm that an electrical connection has been made. The plugs are particularly solid, making a good, firm connection into the car's socket. A major benefit for Revo and Series 7/netBook owners is being able to plug in and recharge the computer's internal battery while on the move.

Steve Clack

POD car power supplies

From: POD Ltd (see page 130)

Availability: Now

Price: £17/£29 inc. VAT (see text)

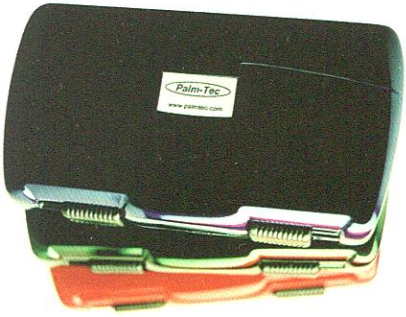
Quality ★★★★½

Value ★★★½☆

PalmTec 'Shell' hard Revo case

The original PalmTec hard cases for the Series 5 range are just about the only practical way for a Psion palmtop to get sat on, dumped at the bottom of a rucksack and driven over, without damage. The ABS plastic outer shell is virtually indestructible and there's a reasonable level of foam padding inside to cushion against sudden drops. The downside is that the extra bulk and hardness creates the impression of carrying around a housebrick. Despite some gentle curves, the new Revo Shell is essentially the same beast, scaled down for the svelte form of the Revo. This is a proven design, with well built opening catches, internal document pocket and recessed top cover badge. As tough as Revo cases get.

Steve Litchfield



PalmTec 'Shell' hard Revo case

From: PalmTec Ltd (see page 122)

Availability: Now

Price: £25 inc. VAT (in various colours)

Quality ★★★★½

Value ★★★½☆

Systemslink leather Revo case

All rather minimalist, but then the simple belt-loop pouch is a classic way to carry around a palmtop with as little bulk as possible. The leather used is of good thickness, with a stiffening insert in the top flap. Velcro is used for the flap closure, but a fairly wide strip is used, which should help it to last the distance.

Actual protection is minimal, but the case is unlikely to drop off of its own accord, with impressive double stitching on the belt loop. Design-wise, the Revo is hard to extract one-handed, with a gentle prod from beneath being required.

Steve Litchfield

Systemslink leather Revo case

From: SystemsLink Two (see inside back cover)

Availability: Now

Price: £15 inc. VAT

Quality ★★★☆☆

Value ★★★☆☆

Arevo leather wallet

Although the Arevo is made of genuine leather, it's on the thin side and doesn't offer much protection, especially at the two ends, where the Revo's plastic hinges strain at the material. Provided that aesthetics are more important to you, the Arevo will do nicely, especially with its tartan flap lining.

The Revo snuggles in the main pocket while the top flap houses banknotes and up to four credit cards. Although the Velcro top clasp is certainly convenient, it does make opening the case rather noisy. I also worry slightly for the clasp's longevity, with the risk of accidental opening and possible damage to the palmtop.

Steve Litchfield

Arevo leather wallet

From: Clove Technology (see inside front cover)

Availability: Now

Price: £15 inc. VAT

Quality ★★½☆☆

Value ★★★☆☆

ps-theresmore leather Revo case

Extremely similar to the Arevo case, this looks immediately smarter with a much glossier leather finish and a 'gold' press-stud in place of the former's Velcro fastening. Considering the stresses involved in keeping the case together and the likely frequency of opening, a press-stud makes a lot more sense. In addition, the case side walls are slightly looser and recessed into the case's hard edges, making inserting the Revo easier and offering more side impact protection.

The only disappointment is the lack of storage inside the top flap. Admittedly there's not a lot of room, but a slot for business cards or a credit card or two would have been nice.

Steve Litchfield

ps-theresmore leather Revo case

From: ps-theresmore (see page 133)

Availability: Now

Price: £25 inc. VAT

Quality ★★★½☆

Value ★★★☆☆

ps-theresmore neoprene Revo case

Looks can sometimes be deceiving, as proved by this rather flimsy neoprene sleeve, which belies its smart appearance. True, it does keep the dust off and offer a small degree of padding once the Revo's safely tucked up, but this case's main problem is in the transition phase. It's just a bit too small, meaning that the Revo doesn't sit properly within the padded loops that line the edges. With the tugging and squeezing that takes place at opening and closing time, it's far too easy for the smooth-skinned Revo to get pushed out of the case, potentially dropping onto the ground.

Steve Litchfield

ps-theresmore neoprene Revo case

From: ps-theresmore (see page 133)

Availability: Now

Price: £18 inc. VAT

Quality ★½☆☆☆

Value ★½☆☆☆

PalmTec neoprene Revo case

Although sized for the Revo, this neoprene and nylon case gives away its intentions with a huge Velcro pad on its inside bottom surface. Given the Revo's opening mechanism, this is obviously not needed, although it might be for other PDAs. At least the stitched-in Velcro is the 'fuzzy' half, which merely adds to the cushioning effect. Both top and bottom halves have semi-rigid sheets inserted, giving the whole thing a good level of protection. Slots inside the top half for banknotes and two credit cards are satisfactory, if a little crudely made, and there's a loop for a pen in the case spine.

Although the case is a good looker in general, the plastic PalmTec badge juts out and tends to catch on things, which is irritating.

Steve Litchfield

PalmTec neoprene Revo case

From: PalmTec Ltd (see page 122)

Availability: Now

Price: £20 inc. VAT (red, grey or blue)

Quality ★★★½☆

Value ★★★☆☆

Series 5/5mx docking station

We looked at an earlier version of this product back in issue 23, but the current version incorporates a number of useful new features, showing a great deal more ingenuity and giving it real utility value for deskbound users.

After sliding open the Series 5/5mx's RS232 port cover, the closed palmtop is pushed home into the docking station's captive mating connector. The cable that sprouts from the back of the station is then plugged into the back of your PC via its standard 9-pin connector. The ingenious part of the cable arrangement is that it splits off into a socket for a standard Series 5 mains adaptor, which then powers the Psion through the appropriate pins in the RS232 connector, obviating the need to plug the mains adaptor separately into the side of the palmtop.

Despite the back of the tough plastic casing being almost opaque, it's completely transparent to infrared light, meaning that you can beam to and from anything placed behind the docking station while in situ. The docking station is solidly constructed, and the Series 5 remains rock solid on the desk to facilitate typing while inside, and there's even a slot for your stylus.

Steve Clack

Series 5/5mx docking station

From: POD Ltd (see page 130)

Availability: Now

Price: £30 inc. VAT

Quality ★★★★½

Value ★★★½☆

Money in your pocket

As part of our main review section, Peter Schuur has been road-testing 11 money management programs

It has been almost three years since we last reviewed the various personal finance packages available for the Psion range. In the intervening months, the list of applications has increased from five to *eleven* and a number of them are now suitable for all EPOC palmtops.

A palmtop computer is ideal for managing your money as you gain ease of access when on the move. In addition, clever programmers can make use of their relatively powerful processors to perform quite complicated analysis of expenditure patterns in order to forecast future cashflow.

The 11 programs tested here range from freeware to commercial, from a simple 'ready-constructed' spreadsheet to programs offering high levels of configuration, sophisticated analytical capabilities and full graphical reports. In providing a comparison of their features we decided that it would be appropriate to split them into two groups. The first five represent the simple money managers and the remaining six provide more complex capabilities.

Mini glossary

If you're new to computerised finance managers:

Budget - your planned expenditure in different categories for each month or year. For example, £500 a year to cover your 'Motoring' needs, or £200 a month for 'Groceries'.

Category - a grouping of related types of income or expenditure, such as 'Salary' or 'Interest' (for income) or 'Motoring' or 'Groceries' (for expenditure).

QIF - Quicken Interchange Format, the de facto file format for lists of transactions. Originally designed for the program Quicken, but now used by virtually every other serious package as an intermediary.

Transaction - a single financial event, such as a withdrawal from a cash machine or paying for something by credit card.

PsiBank

PsiBank adopts a functional approach to personal finance. It omits the conventional toolbar and uses that extra space to show the different account groups (up to five are allowed), with the various accounts (up to 15) pertaining to the highlighted group in the bottom half. This provides quite an easy method of navigating between accounts, simply by tapping on the account name, although it becomes more difficult if more than nine accounts are opened, as they are not all shown on screen.

Full category support is allowed but no budgets can be set. The main transaction screen is clearly laid out and you can decide whether or not to show categories, and items dated after today are shown in italics. Should the number of items exceed the screen height then no scroll bar option is provided—instead you have to navigate up and down the list by using [PgUp]/[PgDn].

A useful running balance is shown down the right hand side to keep you in touch with your current financial status.

The program's most useful features can be found under the 'View' menu, where two reports and two graphs can each be shown on screen and then printed if required. Also, each report can be run for any financial period chosen. The first report shows an analysis of income/expenditure for each category, the second shows the balance of each account at a chosen date. The first graph then shows a moving balance and finally a bar chart to indicate income/expense per month for the selected period. Both graphs can be shown either for one account or for all.

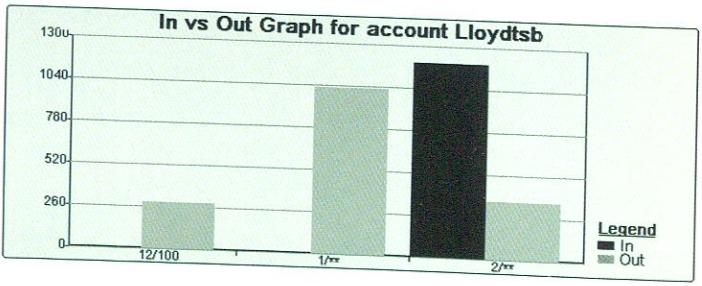
Some problems came up during testing, such as 'Import | QIF', which didn't work. It also didn't allow the import of items newer than the year 2000 and updating a standing order locked the program on restart.

Dat.	Item	Category	Amount	Balance
01/01	Opening Balance		1000.00	1000.00
12/12	FOOTBALL BOOTS	Sport	-35.45	964.55
16/12	TESCO	Food	-120.00	844.55
29/12	SAINSBURY	Food	-136.00	708.55
07/01	CAR POLICY	Insurance	-378.78	329.77
13/01	NEW SUIT	Work	-250.00	79.77
16/01	PAINTING BEDROOM ONE	House	-325.00	245.23D
17/01	SCHOOL MEALS	School	-78.29	323.52D
01/02	TV Licence	House	-8.96	332.48D
01/02	SEASON TICKET	Travel	-220.00	552.48D
02/02	TESCO	Food	-89.67	642.15D
04/02	TV LICENCE	House	-8.96	651.11D
04/02	FROM Coopgold: TRANSFER		1200.00	548.89
04/02	HOUSEHOLD INSURANCE	Insurance	-36.23	512.66
04/09	*HOLIDAY IN FRANCE*	*Holiday*	*-1200.00*	*687.34D*
Confirmed:	£ 512.66		Balance:	£ 512.66

Groups: PsiBank1, PsiBank2

Accounts: Cash, Coopgold, Lloydscrd, Lloydtsb

PsiBank's main screen



PsiBank in graphical mode

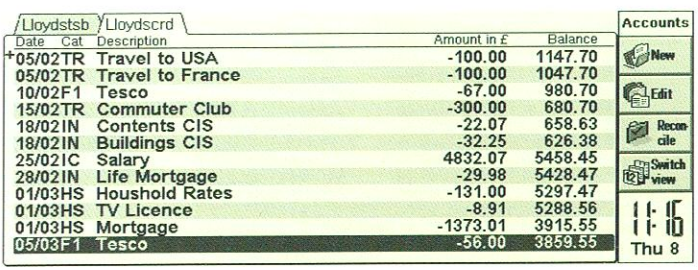
DP5Bank

DP5Bank started life back in Series 3 days and developed quite a following. It was ported to EPOC in 1997 but hasn't been developed since. Interestingly, you are forewarned of this when starting the program, with a dialog advising you that a new version *should* have been developed by now!

That said, the program is robust enough and provides most of the features one would expect from a simple banking program. The main view shows a tabbed interface with each tab corresponding to a different bank account, thus allowing quick navigation between accounts. Transactions are listed by date order, followed by an optional two letter representation of the category and then a running balance. The ability to show categories only in a two letter view doesn't help understanding and you may prefer to uncheck this option. The program author states that categories have been added purely for Quicken compatibility and there is no category summary available.

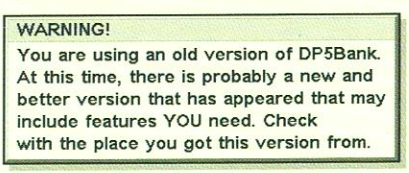
Quicken import worked well but highlighted one of the negative features of DP5Bank, namely its speed. Each transaction took nearly seven seconds to import. This might be acceptable as a one-off, but with 80 transactions entered, any action to update or reconcile and each new entry addition took a similar amount of time, which quickly became very frustrating. DP5Bank's 'Auto-descriptions' feature is useful but doesn't make up for the tardiness of the program.

Although no scroll bars are used, tapping on '+' signs at the top/bottom of the screen allowed quick access to the next full screen and there is support for foreign currency transactions, though by using the latter I did manage to crash the program. There are two levels of display zoom. Analysis is limited to an account overview and a separate balance for all accounts.



DP5Bank's main screen

Nice thought, shame about the lack of updates


WARNING!
You are using an old version of DP5Bank. At this time, there is probably a new and better version that has appeared that may include features YOU need. Check with the place you got this version from.

BankPlus

BankPlus also started life in a Series 3 guise and has now been ported for all EPOC palmtops, coming in a standard SIS file which is far more helpful than the clumsy manual installation procedures used by the previous two products. Getting data into the program from other computer-based banking software proved tricky as there's no QIF file import, though there is a QIF export capability.

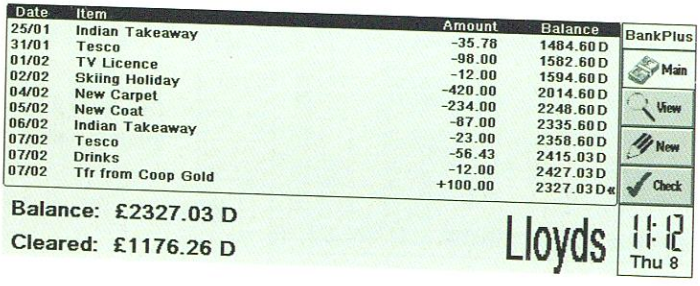
The main screen is well laid out and shows the most recent transactions with a running balance. Only those that are less than a month old are shown, which proved slightly off-putting when nothing appeared on the screen after having entered an old payment. Note that there are no scrollbars and the screen font size cannot be altered.

Three letter abbreviations for categories can also be shown, but as there is plenty of space on the screen I can't imagine why the author felt the need to restrict this feature. One BankPlus feature that *is* particularly useful is the ability to show overall expenditure summarised by category.

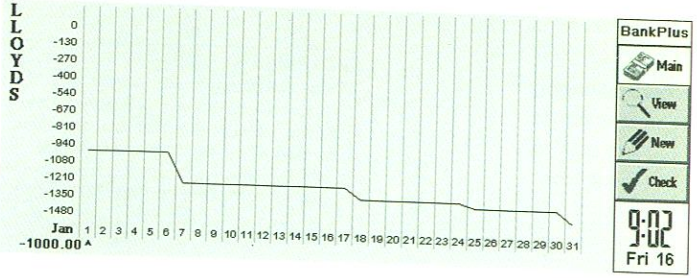
There are two ways of comparing entries against bank statements. A 'Check' function on the toolbar shows each entry in its own dialog, which can then be cleared once it has been verified on the statement. Alternatively the 'View' function shows all entries on the same screen, from where [Ctrl]+[C] will clear each one in turn.

A graphical representation of your bank balance is always the best way to get a quick overview of your financial status, and BankPlus' graph feature showing account balances by date has been nicely implemented.

Those already familiar with the Series 3 incarnation of this program will feel comfortable upgrading to this new version, but newcomers may find the interface rather too clumsy.



BankPlus in action



BankPlus reveals how your money has drifted away

EZBank

EZBank is relatively new to the scene and is freeware, although intriguingly you are invited to register the product after 30 days (and not before) to show your interest in it, and to unlock a special salary-related feature which is otherwise not available. As with PsiBank and DP5Bank the installation procedure is unfortunately manual, requiring a basic knowledge of PsiWin and EPOC.

The main EZBank transaction screen shows transactions by date in the selected account. When entering a new transaction, you have to identify whether it is a 'Spend' or 'Pay in' item, which is a helpful way of looking at things, although it can be ruined by entering a negative amount. Furthermore, a Spend item under bank and credit accounts is shown as a negative and positive amount respectively, which was confusing to begin with. Once again, there are no scroll bars and navigation is done by using the arrow keys.

There's no category support and no import/export from/to QIF, though at least there's support for archiving, merging and splitting the accounts.

Two report types are available: a balance summary table and a graph of incomings and outgoings. The latter isn't very helpful as it defaults to a start date three months before the opening date of the account.

Designed, I suspect, to fill the program author's own needs first and foremost, EZBank is too restrictive to earn a recommendation.

Date	Lloyds	Amount	Balance	Info
2 Feb 01	Spend1	-200.00	800.00	
2 Feb 01	Painting house	-245.89	554.11	
2 Feb 01	--------s-t-a-t-e-m-e-n-t----------			STMNT
3 Feb 01	MORTGAGE	-1000.00	-445.89	
3 Feb 01	Camera films	-12.78	-458.67	
5 Feb 01	Tesco	-100.00	-558.67	
5 Feb 01	**Skiing holiday refund**	**350.00**	**-208.67**	
5 Feb 01	**Loan credit**	**300.00**	**91.33**	
5 Feb 01	New Series 9	-550.00	-458.67	
5 Feb 01	Sainsbury	-134.89	-593.56	
7 Feb 01	Indian meal	-45.65	-639.21	*due*
8 Feb 01	Tesco	-45.00	-684.21	*due*

EZBank | New | Change Acct | Direct Debits | Find | 4:27 Mon 5

EZBank's transactions screen

Last Trans	Account Name	Bal Now	S/O Due	Nett Bal	Overall Bal
8 Feb 01	Lloyds	-684.21	0.00	-684.21	-684.21
5 Feb 01	Coop	317.56	0.00	317.56	-1001.77

Balance shown up to 28 Feb 2001. BALANCE -1001.77

<PRESS ESCAPE>

EZBank | New | Change Acct | Direct Debits | Find | 4:26 Mon 5

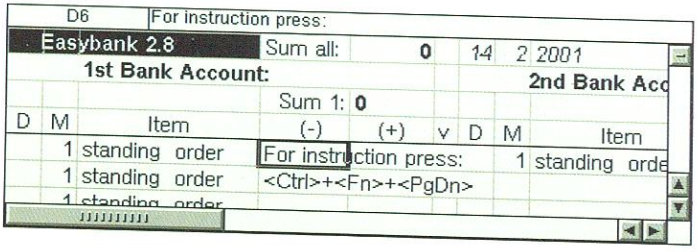
Account summaries in EZBank

EasyBank

Not to be confused with the similarly-named EZBank above, EasyBank offers a completely different approach to anything else covered here. It's nothing more than a specially designed and formatted spreadsheet, complete with formulae to allow transactions to be entered over an annual period starting in January of each year. Curiously, considering it's only a spreadsheet, it is distributed as shareware.

EasyBank comes with the absolute minimum of instructions and I spent some time trying to understand how to input information into the correct spreadsheet cells. As originally set up, it allows five standing orders to be set up each month and up to 90 transactions. By copying and pasting it is of course possible to add more cells and rows to increase these amounts.

Given its spreadsheet nature, the graphing function should have been easy to work, but I just couldn't get the hang of it.



The EasyBank spreadsheet solution

Application:	PsiBank	DPBank5	BankPlus	EZBank	EasyBank
Program author	A W van der Giessen	Daniel Pfund	Pete Sipple	Ken E	Phil Rosengarten
Version tested	2.1	1.1	1.5	3.2	2.9
Type	Freeware	Shareware	Shareware	Freeware	Shareware
Price	Free	£10	£8	Free	£10
Models supported	5mx/Revo	5mx	5mx/Revo	5mx/Revo	5mx/Revo/ Series 7
Maximum no. of accounts	15	12	16	Unlimited	3
Maximum transactions per account	Unlimited	Unlimited	Unlimited	Unlimited	100
Maximum no. of Categories	25	Unlimited	30	Not supported	Not Supported
Quality	★★★☆☆	★★☆☆☆	★★★½☆	★★½☆☆	★½☆☆☆
Value	n/a (FREE)	★★☆☆☆	★★★½☆	n/a (FREE)	★½☆☆☆

Complex money managers

Following on from the five 'simple' money managers discussed in the previous six pages, all of the six applications covered below come with comprehensive instructions and an impressive feature set

5Account

5Account has an attractive and immediately appealing screen layout, with different fonts being intelligently used. Three on-screen tabs allow easy navigation between 'Accounts', 'Categories' and 'Standing Orders', though I would like to have seen a fourth tab headed 'Transactions'. As the program is configured at the moment, a two stage process is required to return to individual transactions, via the Accounts tab.

Categories are shown, with the option to add an opening balance, but there's no support for budgeting.

At the top right of the screen there are seven small buttons for pen navigation. Their size makes them too fiddly to use quickly and in practice simple arrow key navigation is much easier.

A particularly useful feature of 5Account is that by tapping on the date it is possible to sort transactions in either ascending or descending order, with the running balance being correctly shown.

Lloydstsb — Accounts | Categories | Standing Orders

Date ▼	Ref	Details	✓	Expense	Income	Balance
01/02/01	S/O	Houshold Rates	□	£131.00		£5,248.25
01/02/01	0	Holiday payment	□	£100.00		£5,148.25
02/02/01	S/O	TV Licence2	□	£10.00		£5,138.25
05/02	**12308**	**Sainsbury**	□	**£56.78**		**£5,081.47**
15/02/01	*S/O*	*Commuter Club*	□	*£300.00*		*£4,781.47*
18/02/01	*S/O*	*Buildings CIS*	□	*£32.25*		*£4,749.22*
18/02/01	*S/O*	*Contents CIS*	□	*£22.07*		*£4,727.15*
25/02/01	*S/O*	*Salary*	□		*£4,832.07*	*£9,559.22*
28/02/01	*S/O*	*Life Mortgage*	□	*£29.98*		*£9,529.24*
01/03/01	*S/O*	*Mortgage*	□	*£1,373.01*		*£8,156.23*

Opening £7,283.12 Reconciled £5,471.62 Current £33,607.17

Perhaps the most handsome looking finance manager of all—5Account

Constructing a business invoice in 5Account

Invoice No. 1 [Fred Tarrant]

Date	Details	Qnt	Amount	Cur	Total	Local
30 Jan 01	French Windows	2	£23.00	£	£46.00	£46.00
30 Jan 01	Door hanging	1	£10.00	£	£10.00	£10.00
31 Jan 01	Net Amount					£56.00
31 Jan 01	VAT Amount					£6.72
31 Jan 01	Total Invoice Amount					£62.72

5Account runs rather slowly, taking around five seconds to add/modify entries when there are over one hundred transactions entered. The unregistered version cunningly restricts you to only 20 transactions per account, where this slowness is much less noticeable.

Reporting features are limited. One shows the balances for all accounts, a second shows the income/expense overview for each category (and can be run between specific dates). Both reports can be output to screen, printer or to a HTML file, although the on-screen views are disappointing because they don't actually fit onto a single screen, which makes it harder to gain an understanding of the overall picture.

5Account has two unique, business-related features. The first is a separate type of category called 'company expense', which can only be added to 'company' accounts, and is potentially very useful for tracking an expense claim. The second is the ability to create a list of clients and then create invoices for subsequent printing, although the processes involved in doing so are somewhat confusing with no less than eight related menu commands involved. In my opinion, these two business features don't sit cohesively within what is essentially a personal finance program.

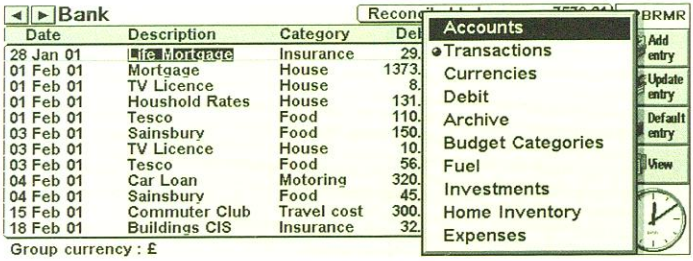
RMRBank

What can one say about the most registered shareware program in the Psion world? I suspect that one of the reasons for its success is that it offers a veritable arsenal of add-on modules over and above its core banking capabilities (such as fuel consumption monitoring, investments, utilities, expenses and home inventory), making it a safe bet should you not be too sure of your needs beforehand. The extra modules are outside the scope of this review, though you should note that each of them are comprehensive programs in their own right and as such are also sold separately.

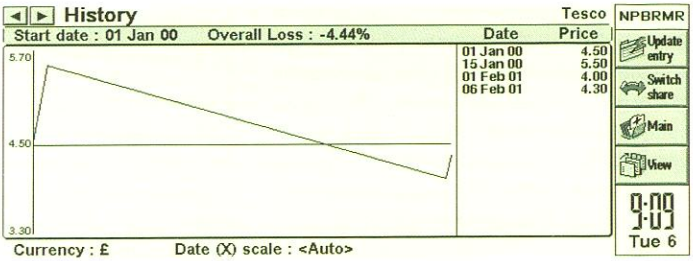
There is no doubt that RMRBank is a very professionally constructed suite, offering comprehensive data collection possibilities between the various modules, all of which can to configured to a high degree.

Budget tracking facilities, showing either category spend or the amount remaining, as well as the percentage spent, are fairly comprehensive, but you have no control over the time period—annual budget figures are always shown, irrespective of the period of transactions. The planning module should also be linked to the budget categories, but isn't.

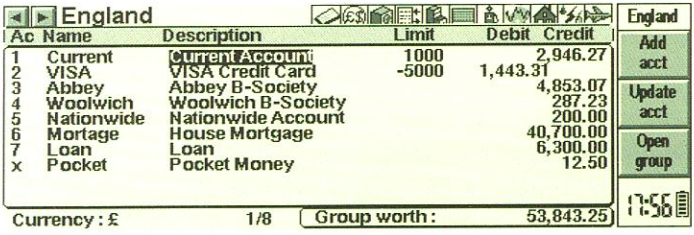
There's an excellent filter view, which allows you to select entries under a particular account by date and/or by category and/or by amount and/or by description. However, this is a read-only feature and no updates can be made. You can also select either all reconciled or unreconciled transactions. There's a 'Look ahead' feature which is potentially useful but slow in practice—it took over a minute to complete its calculations. Speed is an issue in general, as



Views and modules galore in RMRBank



RMRBank's impressive Investments module



RMRBank's main accounts screen on the Revo

modifying entries or moving to the transaction screen when there were over a hundred entries already entered took at least three seconds.

For those with a share portfolio, the Investments module is very useful, showing current net worth of a portfolio of stock as well as a history of price changes in graphical form. Again, it's very configurable and I felt that this module was implemented particularly well.

RMRBank's analytical side could certainly be improved and it can be annoyingly slow, but it still represents good value for anybody likely to use many of its modules.

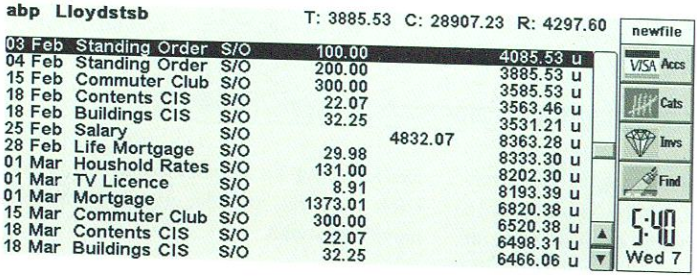
ABP

This is one of the most frequently recommended programs mentioned in the Psion Internet newsgroups, and I was looking forward to casting a critical eye over it. The first point to note is its lightning speed in all aspects of its use—it didn't slow down at all with nearly 300 transactions entered.

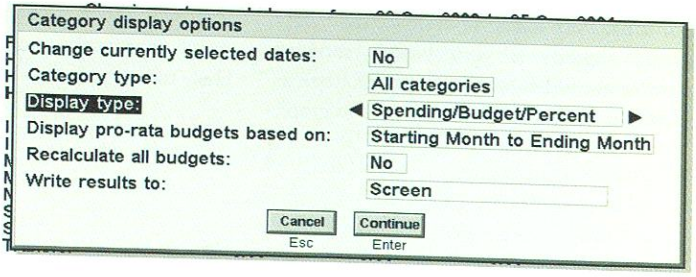
ABP (which, quite amusingly, stands for 'A Banking Package') has all the features you'd expect: categories (with associated budgets and opening balances) which can also be split, support for investments (together with graphs of price movements), good analytical capability throughout its range of functions and good configurability to suit most needs.

On the analytical side, ABP offers basic line graphs for either accounts or categories, plotting amounts over time. The 'Future balance' command provides a clear summary of today's balance, future transactions and standing orders, estimated interest (if chosen) and finally the end balance. Minimum and maximum balances can also be calculated for the period selected. Another powerful (but very hard to find) feature is under 'Category balances', where pressing the [Tab] key brings up a dialog which offers yet more analytical display options, as shown in the screenshot at the bottom of the page.

ABP's 'Find' command proved helpful in 'drilling down' to examine transactions in specific categories and/or accounts. Although support for investments appears quite powerful, I found it confusing in use. Another weakness are the screen displays throughout, which I found rather basic and unattractive. On the plus side, ABP has full support for colour on the Series 7/netBook.


abp Lloydstsb
T: 3885.53 C: 28907.23 R: 4297.60
newfile
VISA Accs
Cats
Invs
Find
5:40
Wed 7
03 Feb Standing Order S/O 100.00 4085.53 u
04 Feb Standing Order S/O 200.00 3885.53 u
15 Feb Commuter Club S/O 300.00 3585.53 u
18 Feb Contents CIS S/O 22.07 3563.46 u
18 Feb Buildings CIS S/O 32.25 3531.21 u
25 Feb Salary S/O 4832.07 8363.28 u
28 Feb Life Mortgage S/O 29.98 8333.30 u
01 Mar Houshold Rates S/O 131.00 8202.30 u
01 Mar TV Licence S/O 8.91 8193.39 u
01 Mar Mortgage S/O 1373.01 6820.38 u
15 Mar Commuter Club S/O 300.00 6520.38 u
18 Mar Contents CIS S/O 22.07 6498.31 u
18 Mar Buildings CIS S/O 32.25 6466.06 u

Fast and functional —ABP



ABP's impressive category analysis

HomeBank

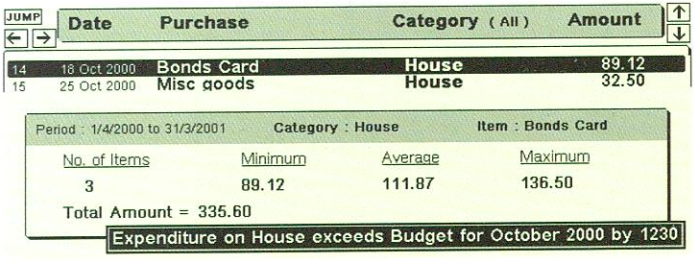
The approach of HomeBank is significantly different from the other applications here. It purports to analyse your expenditure patterns and compare income/expenditure against budgets first and foremost, while offering the usual banking features as well.

HomeBank has an idiosyncratic feel and you'll need to spend some time getting to know its hotkeys, particularly the way the Tab key and Spacebar are used for analytical functions. In every screen you have to select a period for which you wish to view entries and, until these dates are changed, only the entries falling within this period are shown. A mixture of pen and keyboard input is sometimes required, although this is never a problem in practice.

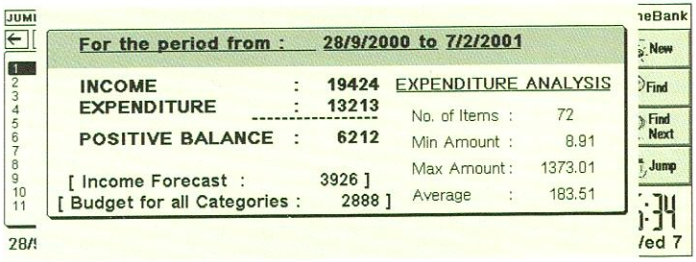
There's no scroll bar and moving up/down screens is accomplished by tapping the on-screen arrow icons or using the [PgDn]/[PgUp] keys. Navigating between transaction and category-related screens is best achieved using the left and right arrow keys. Transactions may be sorted in ascending or descending order and, generally, HomeBank feels pretty quick in operation.

A number of different analyses are always accessible, appearing as pop-up dialogs. Expenditure may be compared to budgets based on the highlighted category over monthly, quarterly or yearly periods, irrespective of your underlying chosen date period. A complete overview of expenditure and income can be obtained at any point by pressing the spacebar, as shown in the screenshot at the bottom of the page. [Tab], in turn, shows minimum/maximum and average expenditures for both transactions and categories.

Finally, when scrolling or tapping on an entry, a message is flashed on the screen showing income/expenditure or expenditure/budget comparisons relating to the month within which the particular item was purchased.



HomeBank's item and budget analysis



Keeping a close watch on finances with HomeBank

Money

PalmTop Software's Money is the only commercial software offering available and it doesn't disappoint, exuding quality throughout. It was developed in C++ from the very mature Series 3 offering of the same name, and all actions are effectively immediate, however complex the command requested. It has also been continually updated since its launch for EPOC.

Money uses the now familiar tabbed metaphor to identify the different money management screens, and navigation between them is easy and intuitive. Nearly all actions may be accomplished by both stylus and keyboard.

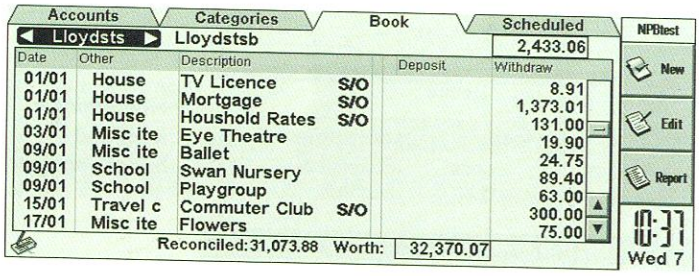
Investments (which are entered into 'asset' accounts) are dealt with by inputting relative increases or decreases in value rather than new total value of the share, and a graph of price movements can then be produced.

The real power of Money (apart from its speed) is contained in its reporting functionality, in terms of the range of reports, criteria for analysis and configurability. Furthermore, you can save each report as a layout, with all the criteria saved ready for use in the future with updated information.

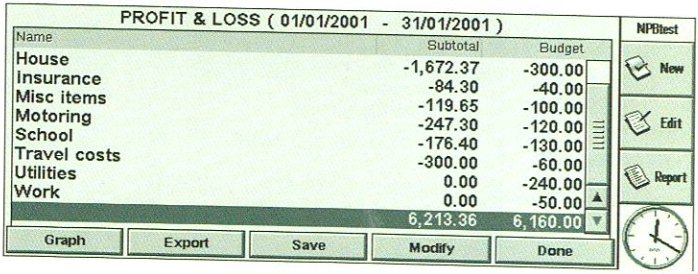
Lastly, PalmTop Software has been able to access the graphing functions of EPOC's built-in spreadsheet, which enables excellent graphs to be produced and rather shows up the graphics display in all of the other banking programs featured here.

One minor criticism is that on the 'Profit and Loss' report the budget amount shown is not pro rata for the period, but instead is calculated on complete monthly segments.

If you can afford it, this remains the most comprehensive and reassuring money manager of all.



Money, the 'classic' money manager



Working with a complex report layout in Money

Pocket Bank

Pocket Bank is a freeware program and, in common with ABP, this doesn't mean that its quality or features have been compromised. It can best be described as a PalmTop Money clone and amazingly, despite being programmed in OPL, it seems almost as quick.

Like Money, the immediate impression is of good design (even if shamelessly copied from it), with equally good stylus and keyboard support. Moving between screens is both quick and intuitive.

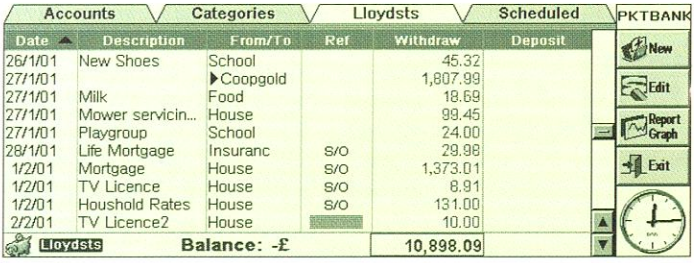
No running balance is shown on the screen when showing transactions, but rather a final balance based on the latest transaction entered, although pressing a menu shortcut will show the balance at the date of the highlighted transaction. Sorting of transactions by ascending or descending dates is also allowed.

Budgets may be entered, as well as the percentage relating to business use. Individual transactions can be shown under each category and there are options to view expenditure amounts against budget totals (not pro rata for period) or business percentage. Categories can be sorted by name or by income/expenditure.

There are several different reports/graphs available, all of which can be printed out. While in graph mode it's possible to toggle a summary window showing net earnings by month.

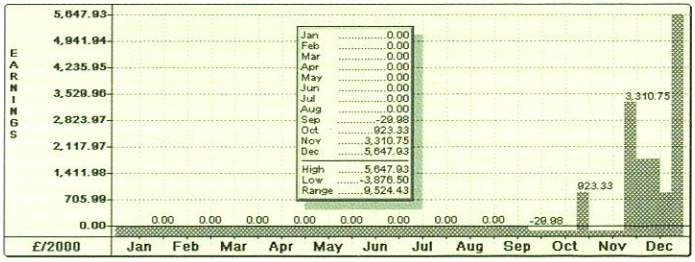
Finally, Pocket Bank cleverly warns of either low memory or battery resources when opening or closing the program.

It's tempting to pass over Pocket Bank as a blatant copy of PalmTop Software's Money, but it has still had a lot of work put into it, and the price (or lack of it) will ensure it finds a home with many people.



Look familiar? This time it's Pocket Bank

Pocket Bank has its own set of graphical displays



Application:	5Account	RMRBank	ABP	Home-Bank	Money	Pocket Bank
Program author	Simon Betteridge	Alan Richey	Malcolm Bryant	Nigel Bamber	PalmTop Software	Richard Ryerson
Version tested	4.05	3.1	5.18	2.4	1.61	4.01
Type	Shareware	Shareware	Freeware	Shareware	Commercial	Freeware
Price	£17	£20	Free	£10	£50	Free
Models supported	5mx/Revo/ Series 7	5mx/Revo/ Series 7	5mx/Revo/ Series 7	5mx	5mx/Revo/ Series 7	5mx/Revo/ Series 7
Maximum no. of accounts	Unlimited	20	Unlimited	25	126	100
Maximum transactions per account	Unlimited	400	Unlimited	Unlimited	2000	2000
Maximum no. of Categories	Unlimited	50	Unlimited	40	126	100
Quality	★★★☆☆	★★★½☆	★★★★☆	★★★½☆	★★★★½	★★★★☆
Value	★★★☆☆	★★★½☆	n/a (FREE)	★★★½☆	★★★½☆	n/a (FREE)

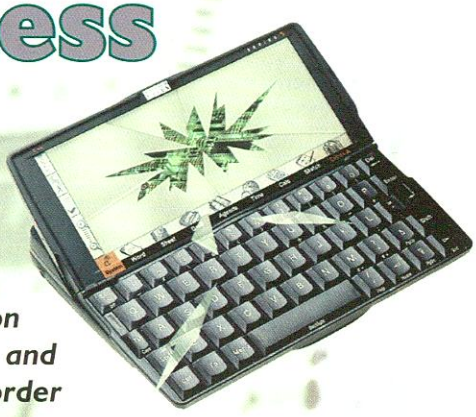
Conclusion time

If a simple bank account manager is all that's required then BankPlus is the obvious choice. For more demanding needs the choice becomes more difficult and five out of the featured six each deserve a mention. If you want powerful reporting features and graphs, and if you can afford it, then buy PalmTop's Money. Pocket Bank isn't as powerful but has much of the same feel at no cost. ABP has a good range of features, blinding speed, is regularly updated and is also free. HomeBank is worth trying out if you have especially analytical needs. Lastly, while RMRBank is perhaps rather slow and cumbersome, with the other modules bundled in it does represent good value for money.

Availability

PsiBank - *home.worldonline.nl/~agiessen*
DP5Bank - *www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/8130*
BankPlus - *www.petesipple.co.uk/bankplus.html*
EzBank - *website.lineone.net/~ezbank*
EasyBank - *ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/prosengarten/easybank.htm*
5Account - *ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/SimonBerridge*
RMRBank - *www.rmrsoft.com*
ABP - *homepages.enterprise.net/pilita/abphomepage.html*
HomeBank - *www.highfell.demon.co.uk/psion.htm*
Money - *www.palmtopsoftware.com*
Pocket Bank - *www.attcanada.net/~rryerson*

In sickness and in health



Steve Litchfield gives advice on keeping your Psion hardware and software in perfect working order

Palmtop computers aren't cheap, so it makes a lot of sense to do what you can to keep yours in good working order and prolong its life. Not just for your own benefit, but so that when your eye is taken by a follow-up model you'll be able to sell the original for a good price and put the money towards the new purchase.

This applies to software as well—I've heard of many cases where a Psion palmtop was abandoned as broken or useless for want of a hard reset and a little file restoration. And of course you'll want your palmtop to be working as effectively as possible all the while it's acting as your 'brains'.

Due care and attention

Let's get a few very obvious points out of the way first. Keeping your Psion in a good, protective case (see, for example, the reviews starting on page 35) when not in use and treating it with reasonable care will help enormously. Due to the complexity of a keyboard-equipped palmtop and the required (small) size and weight, it's inevitable that you're not going to be able to knock nails in with it—there are a number of fragile mechanisms and some easily damaged components.

Chief among these is the screen and ribbon cable assembly (where it joins the screen), which is flexed through almost 180° many times every day. According to folklore, this is famous for failing just after the statutory year's warranty expires, necessitating a costly repair (currently just over £100). Your best protection (apart from the care and attention mentioned above) is to take out an extended warranty on the unit when you buy it. Although such schemes are rarely worthwhile on other consumer goods, they make more sense for something like a palmtop computer that lives its life in the day-to-day firing line.

Also worth taking care of are the screen's surface and the tip of the stylus, both of which can gather dust and grit, leading to ugly scratches and faulty touch-screen input.

A wipe with a soft tissue once a day is usually sufficient, perhaps with a weekly or monthly application of a polymer-based polish such as G-Tek's Supascreen. Also important to keep clean (on the Series 5/5mx/7) is the backup battery, as it's surprisingly easy to lose a good contact and thus all your data come the next main battery change. When it comes to replacing the backup cell, take the opportunity to clean out any dust or grease in the battery compartment and perhaps bend the metal contact gently to re-tension it. Make sure you don't touch the new cell with your bare fingers, but use a tissue or lint-free cloth instead.

Known problems

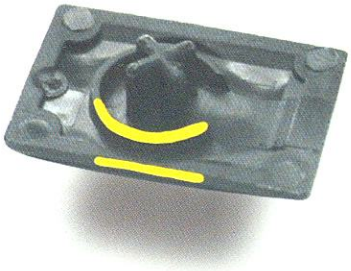
Every PDA has its own little idiosyncrasies and the Psion range is no exception. The Series 5 was famous for peeling paintwork, though this seems to have been sorted out in the 5mx version. An unresponsive Tab key is also very common, and is caused by this unusually narrow key catching on the right hand side of the rubberised membrane that lies beneath it. You can see the problem more clearly by popping off the key to the right of it and observing how the membrane gets trapped and squashed.

This problem can be fixed by popping off the keytop and applying a little home surgery, carefully shaving off a *little* of the plastic along the edge of the Tab key and on the side of the 'C' shaped ridge within it with a sharp knife. Similarly a Spacebar that doesn't work evenly can be fixed by removing it and bending the ends down gently in front of a heat source. It goes without saying that if your unit is still in warranty or you're unsure what you're doing then you should not attempt either of these solutions or disassemble your Psion in any way.

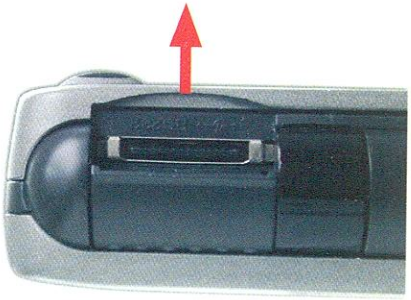
A Series 5/5mx stylus that's jammed in place is also fairly common. The cure is to turn the Psion upside down with the battery end facing you. Put your finger into the RS232 opening and gently pull the bottom out (up) until you hear the latch mechanism click back into place.

Screen matters

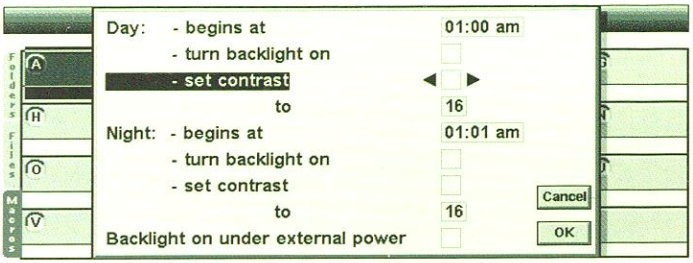
Over time, any touch-sensitive screen may wander from its original calibration. If you notice any problems selecting application



Carefully shave away a little plastic here to fix that sticky Tab key



Pull up here to release a stuck stylus



Using Macro5 to change screen contrast settings automatically at specified times

icons or on-screen objects, it's probably time to recalibrate. Go into 'Control panel | Screen', tap on 'Calibrate' and follow the instructions. Screen contrast may also vary, usually because of temperature variations. Although this is quite normal for LCD screens, note that several third party utilities (including Macro5, featured on page 71) are able to adjust contrast according to time of day, which usually helps somewhat.

Final hardware tips

Infrared seems to be very much 'in' at the moment, as the transport of choice when communicating with other palmtops, modems and printers. Make sure your infrared window is kept clean and as scratch-free as possible. If you still have problems beaming then experiment with different ranges: too close and the receiving infrared sensor will 'saturate', too far away and the signal won't be strong enough.

Revo/Revo Plus owners will already be aware of the less than perfect contact that the palmtop makes with the standard docking cradle. It helps to push down hard in the middle of the opened Revo, just under the 'Phone' icon, to help lodge the cradle's connector into the palmtop. If intermittent connections persist though, you should either get a Travel Docking Station

A Revo in its cradle—somethimes hard to make electrical contact

and use that instead or take the matter back to Psion or your dealer.

Some Revo owners have reported battery charging inconsistencies, usually due to not letting the unit charge fully when first unpacked. All is not lost however, as you can restore the full range of your Revo's battery by backing up, discharging the battery *completely* (by disabling the auto-power-off and leaving it turned on), hard resetting and then charging for a full five or six hours. You can then restore your files.

If you use a Series 5/5mx/7 then be careful of battery state when writing to CompactFlash. It's far too easy to run your batteries low and risk corrupting the filing system on your CF disks. Psion's advice to use alkaline cells in the Series 5 range is well-founded, because writing to or formatting a CF disk takes a lot of current and the last thing you want to happen mid-operation is for your batteries to 'die'.

Software—room to move

Without software, of course, any computer is little more than a pile of components, so it pays to keep the EPOC operating system as happy as possible, to avoid unwanted crashes or conflicts. First priority, as with any computer system, is to make sure there's always enough free memory.

The useful System screen disk gauge

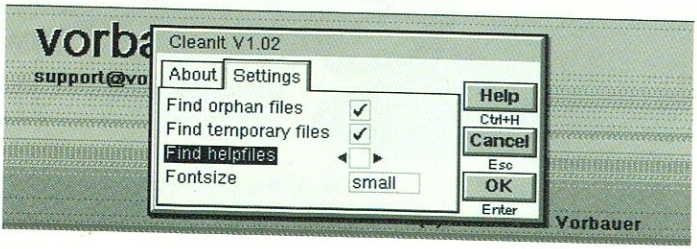
It's tempting to try to cram as much as possible onto your internal disk, but the EPOC operating system needs to be able to grab extra memory for itself dynamically as necessary. Newly-launched third party applications will also need their own allocation when running. If possible, keep at least 1MB (and preferably 2MB) free, even with all your regular applications and documents open. Running with a smaller safety margin carries some risk of program and operating system crashes and maybe even data loss.

The same goes for CF disks. Both EPOC and the electronics on the chip need room to manoeuvre when deleting files and moving them around. If you run your CF disk at 95 percent capacity then you can expect slow performance and possible corruption.

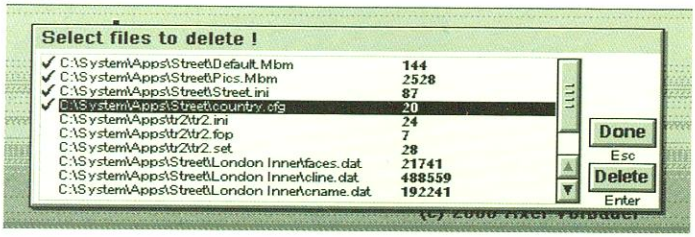
Turning on the System screen 'disk gauge' (with [Ctrl]+[U]) can help a lot, keeping you aware of how much memory (disk space) is free at any time.

Keeping your house clean

Related to making room on both internal and CF disks is having a periodic clear out of old and unnecessary files. Deleting old



CleanIt ready to roll



CleanIt—it's surprising what can be hanging around in memory

documents is obvious, but what about a trawl through the System folder, removing leftovers from long-deleted applications or perhaps a crashed web browser session? Do you really need all those messages in your Email 'Sent' folder? And check \System\Temp periodically for files to delete manually.

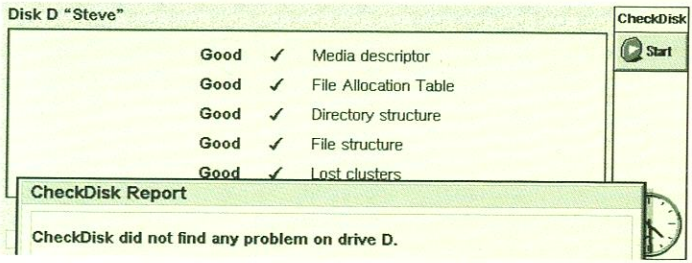
See our feature 'Inside the System folder' in issue 28 for more detail on what is and what isn't supposed to be there. The freeware utility CleanIt *(www.vorbauer.com)* can help too, specialising in the removal of application remnants.

Common problems

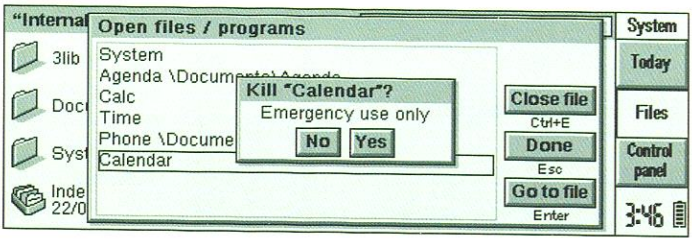
Many EPOC error messages are symptomatic of a slightly confused operating system. Your main applications may still be working properly, such is EPOC's robustness, but something's obviously wrong and needs attention. Common symptoms are a 'Not found' message appearing when in Email or when trying to turn on the Remote link, or a negative or ridiculously high battery current being shown, but any number of other strange things might appear to happen. In each case, a soft reset will almost always cure the problem.

If not, then try a full backup, hard reset and restore from backup. If this also fails to get everything working fully, then as a last ditch solution you might like to try a very hard reset (see the boxout on the following page). Failing all this, you might have some conflict between various third party software or even a hardware problem of some kind. The former can usually be deduced only by time-consuming trial and error, testing different combinations. If the latter, then refer to 'Problems with your Psion?' on page 112.

Disk, file and folder problems, typically seen on the System screen as corrupted names or items that can't be deleted, are rare and more worrisome. There's nothing EPOC itself can do about these, short of a hard



Checking out a CF disk with EDU's CheckDisk



Killing a miscreant application with [Shift]+[Ctrl]+[E]

reset, checking the backup and restoring, but CheckDisk (part of the commercial Essential Disk Utilities, see page 75), will almost always restore your files and folders back to a clean and consistent state. It's worth running CheckDisk over your Psion's disks regularly, even if you haven't noticed a problem—it's better to catch a disk problem early as part of regular maintenance than discover it during the middle of a rush job.

Kill or cure

There will be occasions when an application locks up completely, perhaps obvious because it's in the 'foreground' and not letting you use any keystrokes, perhaps less obviously by simply hanging around in the 'Open files' list and taking up valuable memory and resources. When trying to track down an elusive problem, it's always worth checking this list for something that shouldn't be there.

If stuck in the foreground you can kill it stone dead with [Shift]+[Ctrl]+[Fn]+[K]. If you can get at the 'Open files' list then [Shift]+[Ctrl]+[E] is usually enough. It goes without saying that if the application misbehaves again then you should report the fault to the appropriate developer.

Don't worry

Psion palmtops are normally reasonably reliable and serious problems are rare. All the same, they're complex pieces of electronic equipment running even more complex software, and having to solve the occasional problem is to be expected. Hopefully you're now just that little bit more prepared.

Resets and repairs

Please see your manual for details on performing a 'soft' or 'hard' reset for your particular EPOC palmtop. Make sure you have a full and good backup of all your files and applications before proceeding.

Note also the 'very hard' reset on the Series 5/5mx/7, achieved by removing both backup and main batteries and leaving the palmtop for 30 minutes (to give any charge still stored in its circuits time to leak away).

Configuring AGENDA

Dave Morgan offers some useful pointers towards bending Agenda to your particular needs

For many of us, Agenda was the main reason we bought a Psion palmtop, and yet even those of us who use it constantly are often only scratching the surface of its power.

The trouble is, it works *too* well. You don't need to read the instructions because everything about Agenda works as you would expect. As a result, most of us never bother to look deeper, to find out what the application is really capable of.

The view that works for you

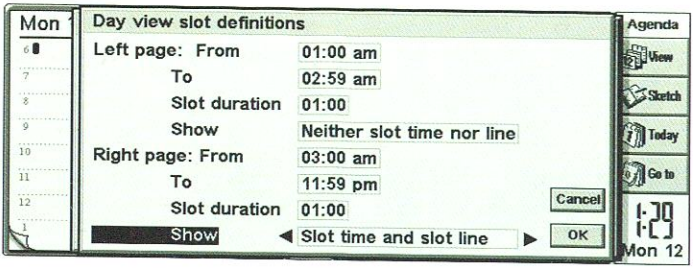
The default view for a new Agenda file is 'Week', a good compromise between showing as many days as possible on the screen while still being able to display a decent number of entries for each day. However, if you mainly use Agenda to keep track of your scheduled appointments, the 'Busy' view might be a better option. This lets you see at a glance when you are free and when you are busy, making it easy to schedule new appointments.

Similarly, if you're driven by To-do items, you might prefer the 'To-do list' view as your default. Slightly more extreme, if you use Agenda mainly to make sure you don't forget birthdays, you'll prefer the 'Anniversary' view. And, of course, many of you will naturally prefer the flexibility of the 'Day' view.

You can change which view is shown as the default from 'Tools | General preferences...' Choose the 'Start-up view' that best suits your way of working. When reopening Agenda after your daily backup, this view will then appear first.

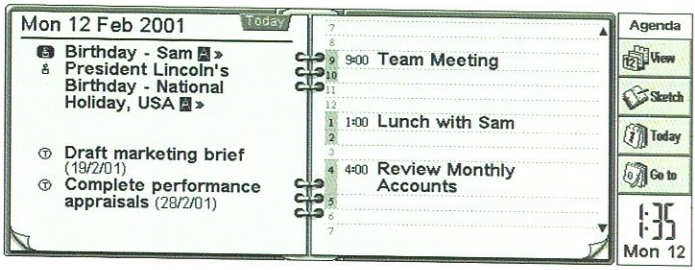
View preferences

By default, the 'Day' and 'Week' views display all entry types. If you find that this results in a cluttered page, you can choose to exclude certain entries from those views. Simply select the appropriate view and then go to 'Tools | View preferences... | Allowed types...', deselecting the entry types you don't want to see. As you'll have gathered, the preferences for each view work quite independently, so as an example you might choose to show Anniversary entries in the 'Week' view but not the 'Day' view.



Setting up left and right page displays in 'Day' view

Perfect for me —how would you like yours configured?



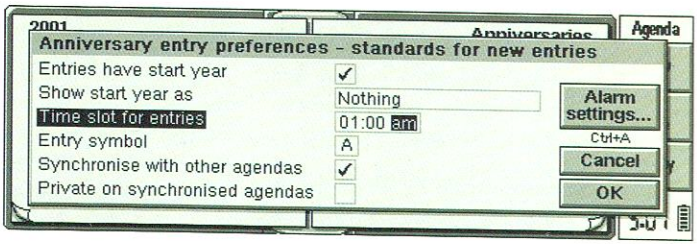
Day view preferences

The 'Day' view offers the most customisation options. Not only can you choose whether to have a lined or a plain page, whether the date is shown on the left or right page, and so on, but you can also configure each page differently.

As an example, if you want to see all of your entries in the 'Day' view but find things getting a little disorganised, you can set it up so that Anniversary and To-do entries appear on the left page and Timed entries appear on the right.

You can do this by selecting the 'Day' view and then going to 'Tools | View preferences... | Slot definitions...' Set the left page 'From' and 'To' lines to 01:00 am and 02:59 am respectively and select 'Neither slot time nor line' from the 'Show' choice list. Set the right page 'From' and 'To' lines to 03:00 am and 11:59 pm, and this time select 'Slot time and line' from the list. Next, go to 'Tools | Entry preferences | Anniversary...' and set the 'Time slot for entries' to 01:00 am. Finally, in 'To-do lists | To-do list preferences', set 'Standard position in other views' to 02:00 am for each To-do list.

Making sure Anniversary entries display in the right place



Setting up whether, and at what time, To-do entries appear in other views

The result of this little excursion into the inner workings of Agenda is that the left page of the 'Day' view now lists Anniversary entries followed by To-do list entries, and the right page details your appointments for the day.

Busy view preferences

By default, your Psion expects you to start work at 09:00 am and finish at 05:00 pm. If your working day is different to this you can adjust these defaults by going into 'Busy' view and using 'Tools | View preferences...'

Unfortunately, if your working day spans midnight you cannot use this feature as Agenda will not let you have a start time that is later than your finish time.

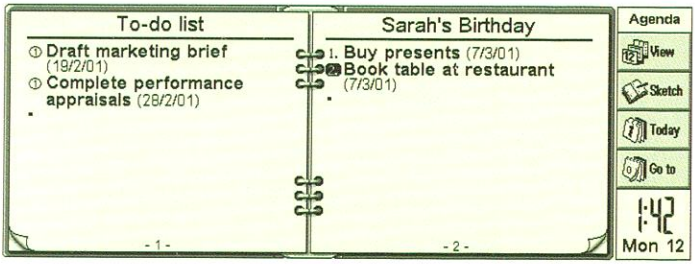
Multiple To-do lists

Agenda allows you to set up numerous To-do lists, which means that if you work on more than one project at a time, you can have a separate To-do list for each one. It also means that you can easily keep your work tasks and personal tasks separate. You'll almost certainly want your To-do lists in a certain order and 'paired up' so that related subject matter appears together. Within a list, you can use 'To-do lists | To-do list preferences... | Page number' to set its desired position in the To-do list pecking order.

If you keep personal To-do lists on your Psion you might not want these to be synchronized with your corporate network for all to see. To prevent a particular To-do list from being synchronized or to mark all entries on a particular To-do list as 'Private,' go into 'To-do lists | Agenda synchronisation' and make your choices via the check boxes for each required list.

Similarly, you might want to see entries from a particular To-do list in other views, but not those from other lists. This can

You can do a lot with To-do lists—but we'll leave them for a follow-up article



be controlled for each To-do list in 'To-do lists | To-do list preferences... | Display entries in other views'.

Alarm default

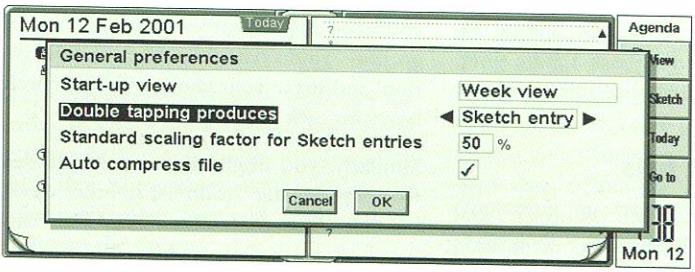
If you frequently use the alarm facility, you can save keystrokes by setting all entries to have an alarm unless overridden. You can even set the default alarm state differently for different entry types, so that, for example, Timed entries can be set to have alarms as standard, whereas To-do list and Anniversary entries might be set to have none.

To set the default alarm status, go to the appropriate 'Tools | Entry preferences' menu command and tap on 'Alarm settings', setting up the 'Timed' and 'Untimed' tabs as required.

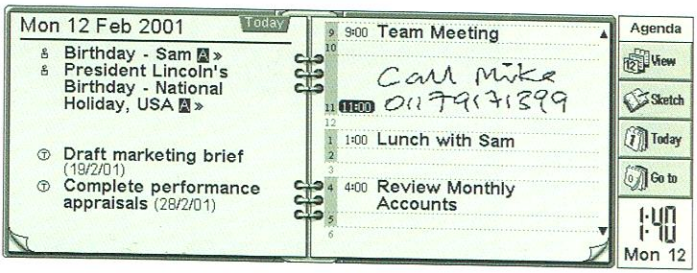
Choosing how to input entries

Most people enjoy using the Psion's keyboard, but when you are using your Psion while on the move it can be awkward to find somewhere to rest it in order to type things in. Unless you buy a third party software package such as Allegro or Calligrapher, Agenda will not allow you to use the stylus to input real words, but there's nothing to stop you from entering items as Sketch objects.

If this appeals to you, it's possible to configure Agenda so that a double tap anywhere on any view opens Sketch rather than the usual entry dialog. Go to 'Tools | General preferences' and select Sketch as the default for 'Double tapping produces'. If you decide to go down this route, you can still input entries with the keyboard by either tapping *once* on the time slot for the entry or by moving the cursor to the time slot for the entry, then starting to type.



Setting up a quick way of writing in Sketch on the 5mx



A quickly-scrawled entry, seen in 'entered' form

One limitation of using Sketch for appointment text is that if an associated alarm sounds, your scribblings are not shown on the alarm screen. Instead the rather feeble message 'Agenda entry has no text' appears.

Standard entry type

Different views are useful for different things. For example, you might use the 'Year planner' to keep track of holidays or exhibitions. In this case, when you are in the 'Year planner' you would want the default entry type to be an Event.

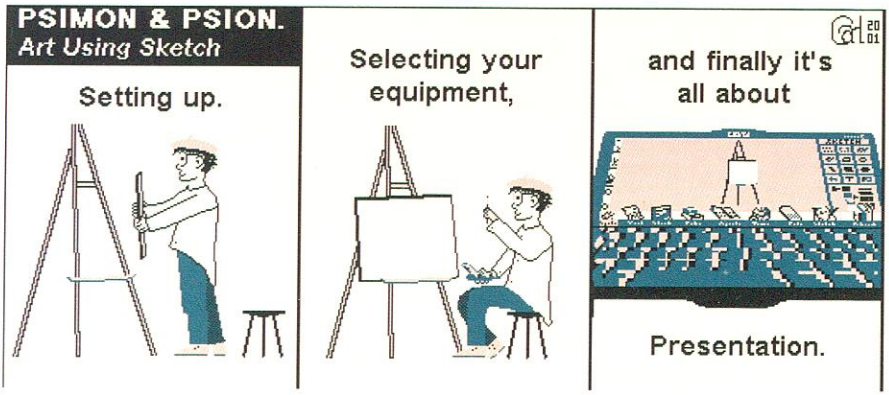
The default entry type for the 'Day', 'Week' and 'Year Planner' views can be set by switching to the appropriate view and using 'Tools | View preferences | Standard entry type'.

Multiple Agenda files

Bear in mind that all the options above can be applied to separate Agenda files independently of each other. So if, for example, you have a file containing just birthdays, you can set it to open in the 'Anniversary' view, with all your other Agenda files opening in 'Day' (or another) view.

Agenda and the Revo

The Revo has much the same configuration options as the Series 5 range, with two differences. Firstly, because of the smaller screen, there is no 'Year planner' view. Secondly, there isn't (supposed to be) a Sketch application. If you miss the latter, don't forget you can download it from *www.epocware.com*, although Agenda's unfortunately not smart enough to spot its restoration and offer 'Sketch entry' as a 'Double tapping produces' input method.



Convert and COMMUNICATE

Pete Sipple explains the different options for converting your Psion documents to PC-readable formats

The power of EPOC's Word, Sheet and Data applications, as we all know, is something that sets the Psion range of handhelds apart from many other PDAs. All of the core features of desktop applications, such as spell checkers, graphs, support for embedded objects and document formatting, combine to bring a powerful suite of tools to the palm of your hand.

As impressive as this power may be, there are occasions when it is of little use unless you can pass on your masterpiece to other people in the non-Psion world. Sure, you can print your document, but if you want to forward your work electronically to another computer user, you're entering the tricky twilight world of file conversion.

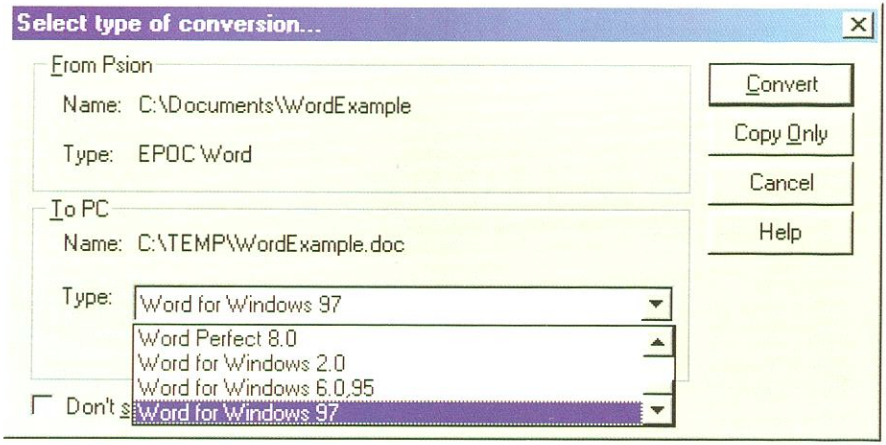
In this article, we'll examine the options for exchanging documents or data with a PC. If you're dealing with a non-PC desktop computer (such as an Apple Macintosh or Acorn) then much of the information here will still be useful, especially that on Psion-based converters, but you should also refer back to our 'Connecting to...' series in previous issues (see 'Reference', at the end of this article).

Built-in converters

Contacts supports the vCard standard, for exchange of contact information with other computers (usually by infrared), Email offers read-only viewing of Microsoft Word attachments and Data can cope with the import and export of delimited text files. Thanks to the established trick of printing using the 'General' printer type to a file (instead of to a printer), it's also possible to export plain text from most applications, although all formatting is likely to be lost in the process.

PsiWin

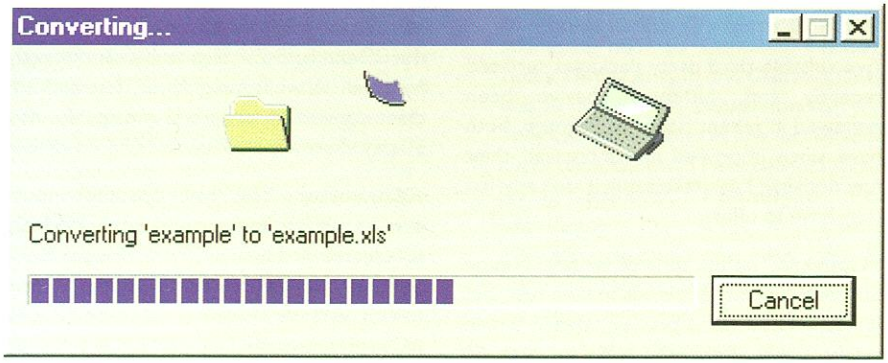
Supplied free on CD with all new Psion devices, PsiWin supports conversion of its own Psion file formats to a host of PC formats. Current PsiWin CDs contain version 2.3.1 and the table on page 68



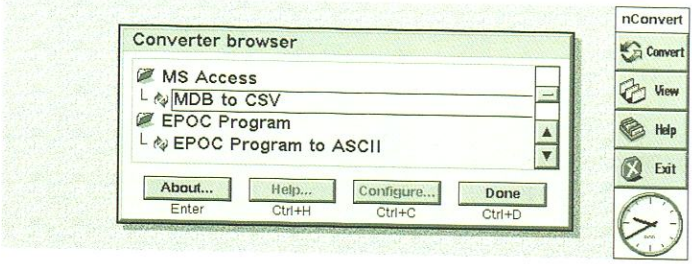
For PC users, PsiWin offers a solid range of conversion filters for general use

reflects this version's compatibility. A newer version, 2.3.2, is available for free download as reported in the news section of this issue. This appears to support Windows 2000 and the Office 2000 suite, but as it is an 'Open candidate', details of the exact changes have yet to be confirmed by Psion. The full release version is expected by the end of March, and we plan to review this in the next issue of Palmtop. Despite some criticism of PsiWin's conversion filters, the conversion of Word, Sheet and Data documents is more than adequate for most users. The drag-and-drop simplicity of copying and converting makes document conversion with PsiWin particularly easy.

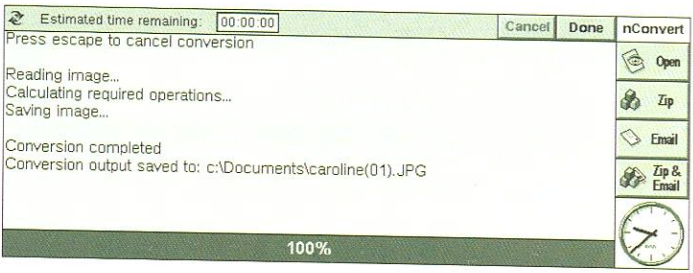
If you have access to a PC running PsiWin then needless to say that this is likely to be your preferred means of day-to-day file conversion.



Conversion in progress—PsiWin does its work



Browsing through nConvert's impressive array of conversion filters



An nConvert file conversion in progress

EPOC-based converters

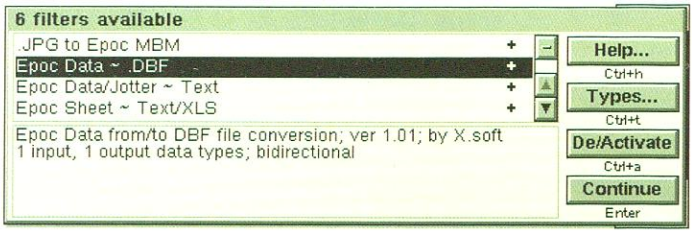
Being able to convert files natively on the Psion has several benefits:

- Those without a PC and PsiWin can finally convert files without begging time with PsiWin from friends.
- Freedom from the desktop, PsiWin and link cable.
- The ability to email files in a PC-readable format straight from your Psion.

Two suitable third party packages surfaced recently and, although they've been reviewed in recent issues of Palmtop, both have since improved and increased their functionality. Let's take a quick look at what they have to offer:

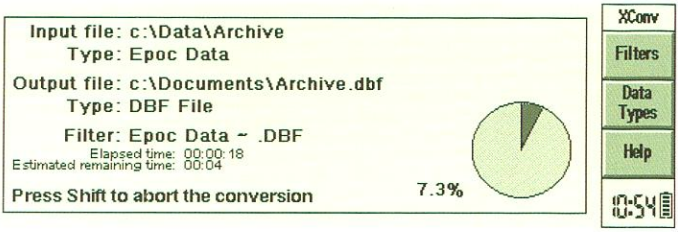
nConvert - At the time of writing, Neuon Software's nConvert is still in beta test, but it's scheduled for a proper release within a few weeks. From the table on page 68 you'll see that nConvert supports conversion to and from a large number of file formats. Version 1.00 will support conversion to Microsoft Excel and Word, including embedded objects in documents. Other recent improvements include support for Microsoft Access, the addition of a file browser for speedy navigation of your folders, a 'Recent file' view, support for the popular ZIP archive format to compress your converted documents, batch conversion, support for different text encodings and a 'one-touch' button to allow converted documents and ZIP files to be sent directly by email. A well thought out, fast and efficient conversion program, obtainable on a 30 day shareware policy.

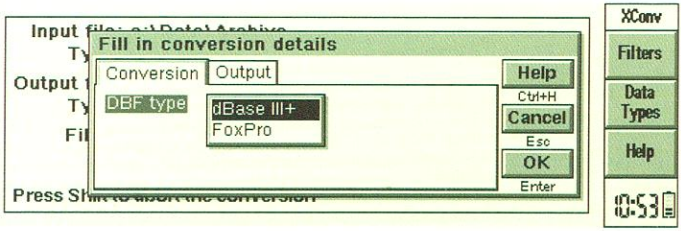
XConverter - This rival application left its own beta phase last year and is now available for electronic download from *www.go32.com*. Sadly, there doesn't seem to be an evaluation version available, as there is with nConvert, but the final version is polished, fast and generally does a good job of



Choosing a conversion type in XConverter

An XConverter file conversion in progress, with a handy pie chart to keep you informed of progress





Setting the finer details of the XConverter process

file conversion, with a graphical pie chart showing progress at all times. Converting Microsoft Word files back to EPOC Word does lose embedded images, but handling of text in various encoding formats is well supported, including Unicode, Mac OS and ISO Latin. There's also a useful 'find and replace' option. Note that XConverter only works on ER5 Psions (5mx, Revo, Series 7).

Both nConvert and XConverter offer the possibility for other programmers to add their own conversion filters, meaning that we can hopefully look forward to ever-expanding functionality from both programs, though such additional filters may well be charged for separately.

Other useful applications for EPOC:

- If you're moving from a Series 3 or Series 5 to a 5mx or Revo, you may wish to convert your Data file of names and addresses over to Contacts. **MxContacts**, **DataContact** and **ConvertData** will all handle this conversion for you. They can all be found at *pda.tucows.com/epoc/contact5.htm* . The excellent mobile phone manager, **PhoneMan Pro** (shareware (£15) from *www.zenobyte.com*), can also convert Data to Contacts. See issue 25, page 54 for more on this subject.
- **C2F** is a small freeware application that reads your Contacts database and writes

EPOC format	Convert to	PsiWin 2.3.1	nConvert 1.0	XConverter 1.0
DATA	CSV	Both directions	-	-
	dBase 5.0	Both directions	-	-
	dBase III & IV	Both directions	-	Both directions
	Foxpro 2.0/2.5/2.6/3.0	Both directions	-	Both directions
	MS Access 95	Both directions	Both directions	-
	MS Access 97	-	Access-to-Data	-
	Text	-	-	Both directions
WORD	Ami Pro 3.0 & 3.1	Both directions	-	-
	HTML 3.2	-	HTML-to-Word (ER5 only)	Both directions
	HTML 4.01	-	Word-to-HTML	-
	MS Word 2.0/6.0/95/97	Both directions	MS 95/97/2000 to EPOC Word	-
	MS Works 3.0/4.0	Both directions	-	-
	RTF	Both directions	Bi-directional including objects	Both directions
	Text	Both directions	Both directions	Both directions
	WordPerfect 5.1/5.2/6.0/7.0/8.0	Both directions	-	-
SHEET	CSV	Both directions	Both directions	-
	HTML	-	Sheet-to-HTML	-
	Lotus 123 WK1/3/4	Both directions	-	-
	MS Excel 2.1	-	-	Both directions
	MS Excel 4/95/97/2000	Both directions (2000 in 2.3.2)	Excel 4 to Sheet	Both directions
	MS Excel 4.1	Both directions	Both directions	Both directions
	MS Excel 5.0	Both directions	-	Both directions
	MS Works 3.0SS/4.0SS	Both directions	-	-
	Quattro Pro 5/6/7/8.0	Both directions	-	-
	Text	-	-	Both directions
SKETCH	BMP	Both directions	Both directions	-
	GIF	-	Both directions	-
	JPG	-	Both directions	JPEG-to-MBM
	LBM	-	Both directions	-
	PCX	-	Both directions	-
	TGA	-	Both directions	-
	XBM	-	Both directions	-
PROGRAM	Text	-	Both directions	-
JOTTER	Text	Jotter-to-Text	Jotter-to-Text	-
	RTF		Jotter-to-RTF	
	HTML		Jotter-to-HTML	
WEB bookmarks	Netscape bookmarks	-	Both directions	-
RECORD	WAV	Both directions	-	-
AGENDA	Lotus Organiser 2.1/97/97GS	Synchronize	-	-
	MS Outlook 97 and 98	Synchronize	-	-
	MS Schedule+ 7,7a/7.5	Synchronize	-	-
EMAIL	Lotus cc:Mail 8 & above	Synchronize	-	-
	MS Outlook 97 and 98	Synchronize	-	-

selected fields to a standard comma or tab-delimited text file. You can then import them into Data or any other program that imports standard text files. *homepages.enterprise.net/pilita/c2f.html*

- **MBMView** can open and save bitmap images in JPG, BMP and GIF form, in addition to the Psion Sketch and MBM formats. Shareware ($25) from *ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/platodva/psion.htm*
- **RMRDraw** can import and export vector graphics in Windows WMF file format. Shareware (£25) from *www.rmrsoft.com/epoc/draw.htm*

The ins and outs of conversion

Before attempting to perform any kind of file conversion, it's important to realise that it's something of an imprecise art. When converting more straightforward file types such as Psion databases or Jotter files there's generally little to go wrong, but with complex file formats, particularly spreadsheets, it's often over-optimistic to expect every small nuance of the original file to be faithfully transferred. The more complex the formatting you apply to a document, the more likely it is that a few things will appear a little differently in the converted document.

You generally don't need to worry that the basic content of the file will be harmed in any way, but parameters such as spreadsheet cell sizes, borders and shading can often be altered or even lost.

With graphics files, some converters may change the colour balance of your images or even 'dither' the colours, seriously degrading the image quality.

Playing safe

Because different conversion filters can give slightly different results when converting the same file, you may wish to consider trying out more than one of the conversion solutions listed here, particularly if you do a lot of conversion work with sophisticated documents. There are far too many combinations of input and output file formats to go into exhaustive detail here, and the accuracy of your own conversions will depend very much on the complexity and specifics of your particular documents.

A few workarounds

If the file conversion type you require isn't available with the software you're using,

Useful conversion tools for non-PC users

- **PsiConvert** is a freeware Linux/Unix based EPOC file converter. It will convert EPOC Word files into either HTML or plain text. It will also convert Psion Sketch and MBM files to just about any graphics format you desire. *huizen.dds.nl/~frodol/psiconv*
- **EPOC to Mac Text Convert**, a simple Macintosh drag-and-drop application, pulls plain text out of EPOC Word and OPL files. It also converts carriage returns and line-feeds as appropriate for plain text files. *pda.tucows.com/epoc*

you can often work around this by saving into a different format. If, for example, your conversion software doesn't support Microsoft Excel version 5, remember that Excel 5 will allow you to save your files into Excel 4 (or earlier) format instead. Conversely, if you save from your Psion into Excel 4 format, version 5 will still be able to read it. Just remember that an earlier version of any software package will almost invariably be unable to read files created with a *later* version of that program.

Purging the Series 3 ghost

With the advent of the excellent nConvert and XConverter programs, it seems that the ghost of the Series 3 has finally been banished. This was rightly famous for being able to read and write such formats as RTF (Word) and DIF/WKS/WK1 (Sheet) on the Psion itself, without recourse to PsiWin at every turn. Now the newer range of more Internet-aware EPOC devices can boast even better capabilities, making life easier for both truly mobile and non-PC users alike.

Armed with a copy of both nConvert and XConverter, the Psion-toting road warrior can send and receive email attachments in the vast majority of common PC file formats, removing almost all the perceived inconvenience and incompatibilities of Psion's proprietary file types.

Availability

PsiWin - last reviewed in issue 25. Price: (currently) free from *www.psion.com*

nConvert - reviewed in issue 31. Price: £20 from *www.neuon.com/apps/nconvert*

XConverter - reviewed in issue 30. Price: £34.66 from *www.go32.com*

References

Connecting to an Apple Macintosh - issue 26, page 77

Connecting to an Acorn - issue 27, page 75

Connecting to an Amiga - issue 28, page 69

Connecting to an Atari - issue 29 page 79

Getting to grips with Macro5

In the second part of our series, Steve Clack looks at how to get the best from one of EPOC's most powerful third party utilities

After going through the basic installation and setup procedure in the last instalment, we'll now move on to create our first shortcut and then proceed to run it.

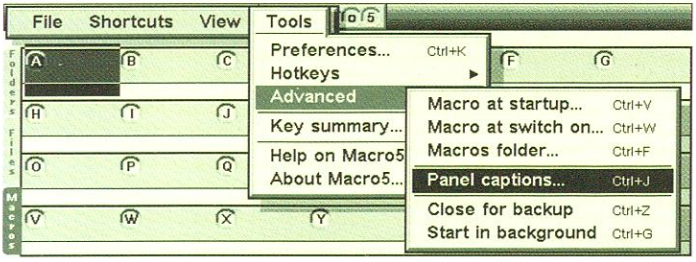
First off, tap on the Extras bar and launch Macro5. If you left it running from last time then this will simply bring it to the foreground, ready for use.

It's most important to remember that selecting Macro5 from the Extras bar is only used for editing and creating macros, or for configuring the program to your personal preferences. Many beginners make the mistake of trying to run their shortcuts from here too, which doesn't work. Instead, shortcuts (macros) are invoked with special keystrokes or by launching Macro5 in a different way, which we'll come to shortly.

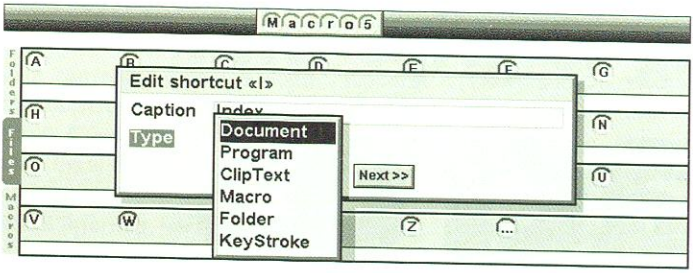
An easy example

To start with an easy example, we'll create a shortcut to launch one of your most frequently used files. For the sake of this example, I'll create the shortcut to launch a Data file containing the Palmtop magazine index, which I personally need to refer to several times each day. By substituting your own preferred file name you can of course launch any file you like.

So, first off, we need to decide which one of the 81 available 'slots' will be used to store our macro. Note that throughout the text of this series we'll use the terms 'macro' and



Preparing to rename one of Macro5's three 'panels'



Choosing a shortcut type

'shortcut' interchangeably, as they mean essentially the same thing in this context.

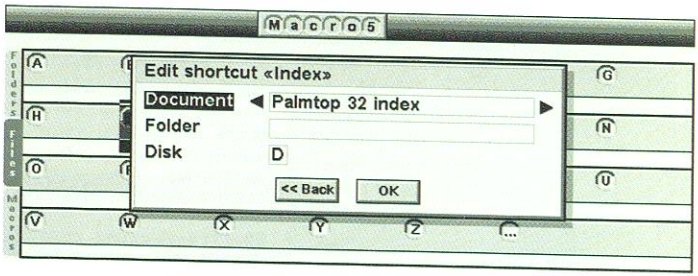
The very first step is to choose one of the three shortcut 'panels' that are presented to us. You can move quickly between the three of them by tapping on the appropriate tab at the left of the screen. If you want to change the names of the panels to suit your own preferences then use the 'Tools | Advanced | Panel captions...' menu option and type in whatever names you wish.

For this example, as we're going to create a very simple shortcut to launch a file, I'll put this in my 'Files' panel. Tap on the tab for the 'Files' panel now (or on whichever one is most appropriate if you've named your own panels differently).

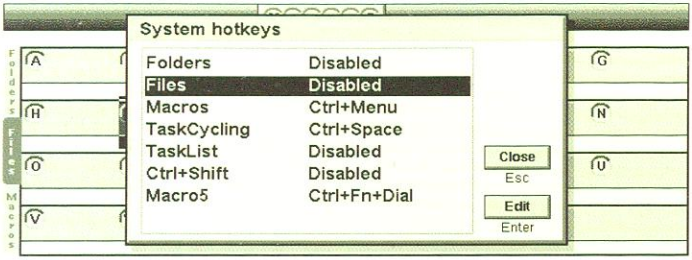
You can now choose a location associated to any of the letters A-Z, or the Spacebar. To make it easier to find and run them later, always try to position each of your shortcuts with a letter that's in some way associated with the function of that shortcut. In this case, and as we've got all 27 options free in this panel, we'll choose 'I', for 'I'ndex.

Next we'll get down to creating the shortcut itself, which is actually a very simple and straightforward task:

- Now you've got the correct panel up on screen, tap twice on the letter you wish to assign to the shortcut, in this case 'I'. This will then take you through a step-by-step setup process.
- In the 'Caption' line, enter a descriptive name for the shortcut. This will appear on the Macro5 screen next to that letter, so you can find the macro at a later date. Type a short name here, say 'Index' if you're following this example exactly.
- Next, move down and tap on the 'Type' option. Here, we need to define what the shortcut is going to do for us. In this case we're going to use it to go to a specific document name, so select 'Docu-



Navigating to the filename of the document we wish to launch



Editing hotkey combinations to access each Macro5 panel

ment'. Ignore the other five options for now—they're all immensely useful, but we'll go through each of them in separate examples later on.

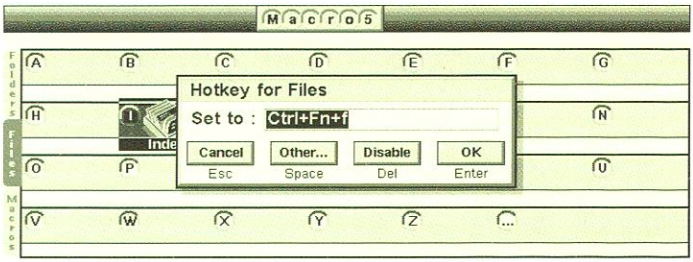
- With 'Document' selected as the Type, tap on the 'Next>>' button. This brings up a standard file selection dialog where you need to point to the document that you wish to launch. Navigate to the correct disk and folder, and find the name of the file you're looking for.
- Finally, tap on 'OK', and the newly-created shortcut will appear in your Macro5 panel, ready to run—almost.

How to run a macro

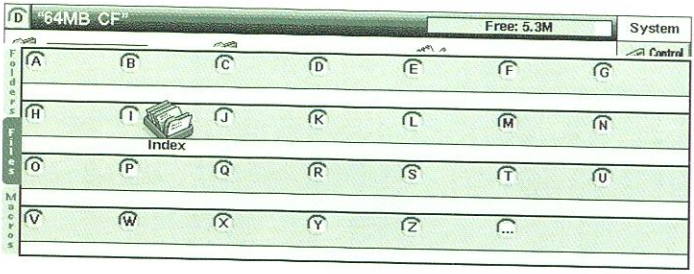
The next step is the most important one. As mentioned earlier, you can't run the shortcut from here—if you tap on the 'Index' shortcut now, you'll simply be taken back into the editing process that you just left. If you've already done this in error, simply press [Esc] to abort the dialog.

To invoke Macro5 in order to run a shortcut, you first need to assign a special keyboard shortcut to that panel. To check what it's currently assigned to, select 'Tools | Hotkeys | System...' from within Macro5. You can set this to any keystroke combination that isn't already used for another program. In this example I've used [Ctrl]+[Fn]+[F] for accessing my 'Files' panel.

To set this, highlight 'Files' in the 'System hotkeys' dialog, tap on the 'Edit' button and select the desired key combination. Note that when the 'Hotkey for Files' dialog is up, you can press the desired keyboard hotkey strokes directly, and they'll immediately appear in the 'Set to:' line of the dialog. There are a number of other options for setting more esoteric hotkey options (accessed from the 'Other...' button), but we'll cover these in a later instalment.



Choosing a hotkey combination for the 'Files' panel



Our first shortcut in place and ready to run

Finally, remember that if you've chosen a different name for your panel or a different hotkey combination to access it, what you see on screen will be somewhat different from what's described here.

Once you've set the hotkey combination, tap 'OK' or press [Enter], then use [Esc] to exit from the 'System hotkeys' dialog (which will now show your hotkey combination for the 'Files' panel), and then press [Esc] once more to put Macro5 into the background. As mentioned in the last instalment, Macro5 must always be left running in the background in order to function, and it will fail to work if you leave any dialog or menu on screen when you send it to the background. If ever your shortcuts don't work, the first thing to do is to go back into Macro5 and check this.

Run, run, run

Now you're ready to access and run this simple shortcut, from any program, no matter what you're doing or what other programs are running. To illustrate the point, go into some other program or file, as though you're working on something else. Now, to access your shortcut, do the following:

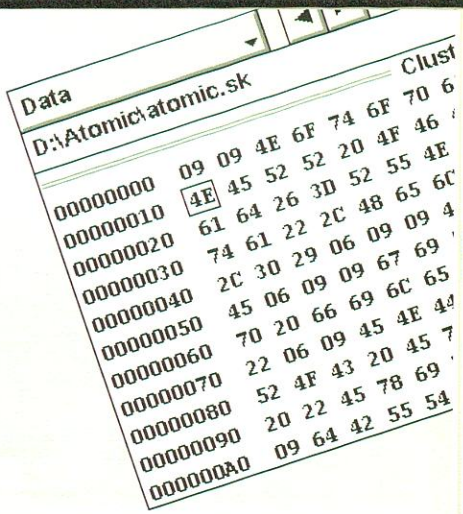
- Press the Macro5 hotkey stroke we've just defined - [Ctrl]+[Fn]+[F]. This pops up Macro5 in 'launch' mode, with the 'Files' panel selected.
- To run the macro, you can just tap on the 'Index' icon. Alternatively, you can type the letter that corresponds to your shortcut, in this case 'I'. By the way, you'll notice that the icon matches the program your file 'belongs' to, in this case the built-in Data application.

Getting clever

Congratulations, you've just executed your first macro. You may have noticed that the 'Index' file doesn't need to be open in order for Macro5 to do its work. If the file is currently closed down then Macro5 will kindly open it for you.

In the next issue we'll show an even quicker way to access your shortcuts, by assigning them directly to their own hotkey strokes. We'll also look at some of the other shortcut types, which are even more useful and start to tap into the *real* power of Macro5.

Getting along with Essential Disk Utilities



Steve Litchfield and Martin Guthrie explain why EDU should be part of every power user's toolkit

In an ideal world, of course, this package would never be necessary. CompactFlash (CF) disks of every size would work quickly and never go wrong. Battery glitches would be impossible and all your precious files as safe as if carved in gold.

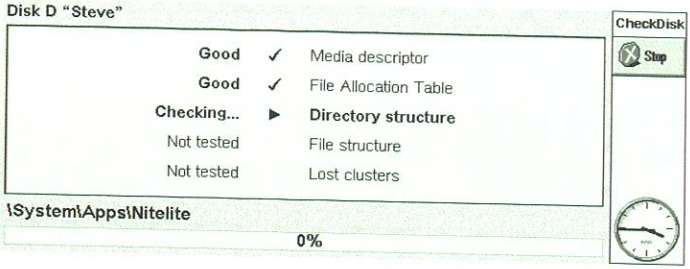
Alas, as discussed on page 53, the reality is that modern technology that relies on electrons jumping around silicon chips, however clever, is still prone to failure.

Launched back in 1998 by Atelier (*www.ateliersoftware.com*), Essential Disk Utilities (EDU) aimed to be the EPOC equivalent of the famous Norton Utilities for DOS, the original utility package that saved the day again and again in the early days of PCs. Although EDU has largely succeeded in this aim, if only by virtue of being the only player in the field, you should note that it hasn't been significantly updated since its launch, doesn't work at all on the Psion Revo range and that there appear to be a few issues with the Series 7 and netBook. In fairness, EDU's only really needed when dealing with CF disks, so Revo-incompatibility isn't much of an issue.

EDU is composed of four quite separate utilities of varying usefulness: CheckDisk, SmartFormat, Disk Editor and Optimise. Although you can't install any of these separately, it's easy enough to remove the ones not needed after installation. To be safe, it's best to install these on the Psion's internal disk, if only because if you're having CF problems and are swapping disks around feverishly then it's nice to rely on your trusty disk tools being to hand all the time.

CheckDisk

EPOC's only real equivalent of the various 'disk doctor' utilities available on the desktop, CheckDisk has proved its worth a number of times in the Palmtop offices. Whether caused by low battery state when writing to CF, by an EPOC or third party software error or simply by a random hardware glitch, it's surprisingly easy to end up with a corrupt disk.



Checking a disk in detail with EDU's CheckDisk

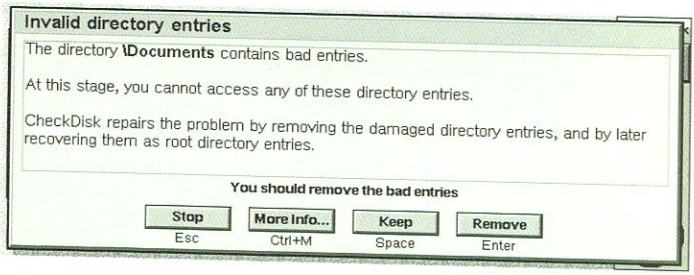
Luckily, EPOC's fairly robust and the corruptions are usually limited to specific folders or files, with everything else carrying on as normal, but you'll still want the problems sorted out as soon as possible. In the absence of EDU, formatting and then restoring the disk's contents from a known good backup is an effective, if time consuming (and a little drastic) solution.

CheckDisk is a lot faster, cross-checking the disk's File Allocation Table (FAT), directory and file structure. A computer filing system is a complex beast, with numerous internal address tables and checksums, and CheckDisk does a good job of finding inconsistencies and offering to fix them, almost always without data loss of any kind.

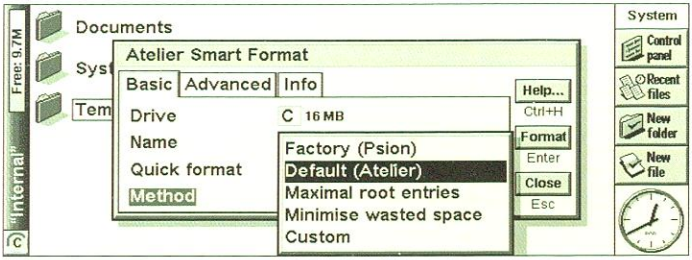
It can also scan for 'lost clusters', file fragments that used to be part of files but which, due to a disk error of some kind, have now become orphaned or 'lost'. Once found, these can be given names and converted to usable files, although usually not viewable in the original creator application because of the bits of the file that are missing. A hexadecimal file viewer such as Disk Editor (see below) or the freeware HexEditor (*www.neuon.com*) will give you an idea of the file's contents, if only to identify where it came from and then to be able to check the original application or document, restoring from a backup if necessary.

SmartFormat

This lets you format a CF disk using various formatting methods other than (and including) the Psion built-in default. SmartFormat's initial dialog has three tabs: 'Basic', 'Advanced', and 'Info'. The first of these simply specifies which disk you want to format, what name you want to give it and whether you want to use 'Quick format' (which just wipes the disk's directory without physically rewriting every byte). Atelier also suggest a variety of predefined formatting methods, although we'd suggest


Invalid directory entries
The directory \Documents contains bad entries.
At this stage, you cannot access any of these directory entries.
CheckDisk repairs the problem by removing the damaged directory entries, and by later recovering them as root directory entries.
You should remove the bad entries
Stop
Esc
More Info...
Ctrl+M
Keep
Space
Remove
Enter

When a problem is found, CheckDisk is very helpful



SmartFormat's 'Basic' tab

you read through this article to gain an understanding of what's going on before diving in to start the formatting process.

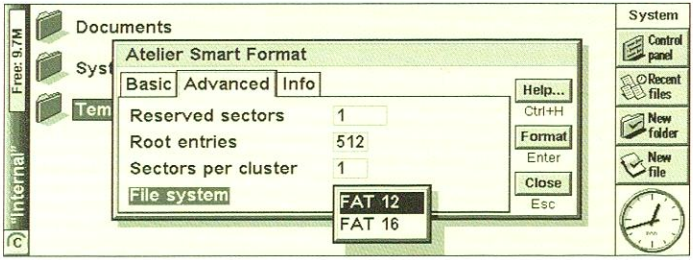
Advanced formatting

The 'Advanced' tab automatically selects the 'Custom' formatting method on the 'Basic' tab and lets you choose values for a variety of very technical parameters: FAT12 or FAT16 (the former is marginally more efficient but means you'll start hitting addressing limits with big CF disks), the number of Sectors per cluster (discussed below), the number of Root entries (leave this at 512) and the number of Reserved sectors (leave this at one).

Despite what you might think about solid state CF disks, formatting them differently can dramatically change their speed and effective storage capacity, in some cases by as much as a factor of two.

Before getting to work with SmartFormat, make sure you have a full and reliable backup of all your data. Remember that formatting a Psion disk wipes it irretrievably. And make sure that SmartFormat is installed on disk 'C' (Internal)—you can't format a disk when the program you're using to format it with is installed on the same disk! And before you ask, you can't use SmartFormat to format your Psion's Internal disk, which uses its own set of dynamic FAT formatting rules.

For any given size of CF disk there is a natural pay-off between its speed and its usable formatted capacity. By increasing the size of the clusters used (the units of disk space used to store files and parts of files), their number is reduced and disk operations will be faster. By decreasing the size of the clusters, there's less wasted space inside each one (especially when you have lots of very small files on a disk, such as email or Usenet messages or mapping overlays), at the expense of speed.



SmartFormat's 'Advanced' tab

Alternatively

If you have access to a desktop CompactFlash disk drive, note that in addition to simply reading from (and writing to) a CF disk you can also use many Windows utilities directly, including ScanDisk and Disk Defragmenter. Although not designed for CF media, this may be another avenue to explore in the event of CF problems.

The savings in usable formatted capacity can be dramatic. Our 48MB card which initially showed only 2MB free was formatted using the guidelines below and restored from backup, finishing with over 10MB free, with no significant decrease in speed. In Psion's defence, disk sizes of 32MB and upwards would have been unthinkable when EPOC was being designed. Vendors are now shipping 256MB CF disks, making a more appropriate approach ever more necessary.

Palmtop recommends

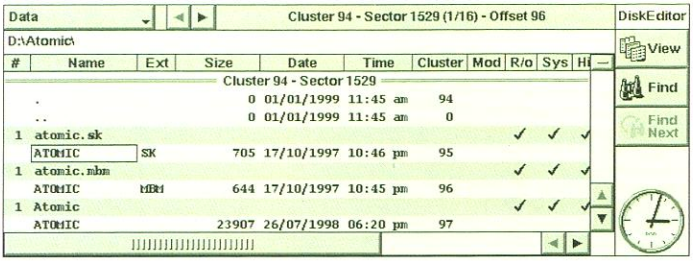
In order to maximise the effective usable formatted capacity of a CF disk it's very tempting to format it with the smallest possible cluster size. This is fine for small (16MB and below) disks. However, on larger disks (20MB and above) this begins to affect performance (in terms of speed of writing to the disk) and on the largest disks (48MB and above) the speed problems become prohibitive.

Although there's not space here to report all the CF brands and settings we tested, you'll find more details on the Pscience5 site mentioned at the end of the article. We can make some recommendations though. The table below gives a rough guide to suggested compromise settings for formatting using SmartFormat. Just look up your CF disk size and read off the 'best' setting to use.

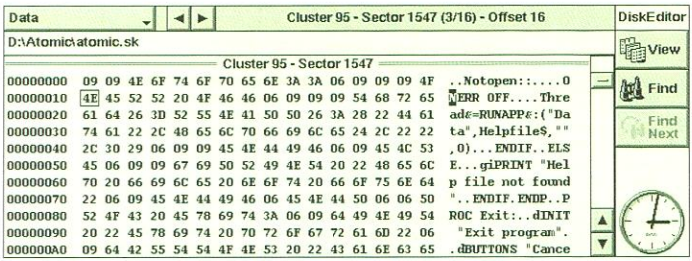
Disk Editor

Best left for use by computer technicians, Disk Editor lets you browse through a disk's contents, sector by sector and byte by byte. Although not the most friendly program in the world, there are at least basic navigational functions, letting you drill down from directory entries into the folders themselves, and from there into the innermost depths of individual files. Very sensibly, the program is 'read-only' until set otherwise in

FAT16 Sectors/Cluster	128+ MB	64 MB	48 MB	32 MB	16 MB	8 MB	4 MB
1						X	X
4				X	X		
8			X				
16	X	X					
32							
64							


Data
Cluster 94 - Sector 1529 (1/16) - Offset 96
DiskEditor
D:\Atomic\
View
Find
Find Next
Name Ext Size Date Time Cluster Mod R/o Sys Hi
Cluster 94 - Sector 1529
0 01/01/1999 11:45 am 94
0 01/01/1999 11:45 am 0
1 atomic.sk
ATOMIC SK 705 17/10/1997 10:46 pm 95
1 atomic.mbm
ATOMIC MBM 644 17/10/1997 10:45 pm 96
1 Atomic
ATOMIC 23907 26/07/1998 06:20 pm 97

Browsing through a disk's directory



Examining a file, byte by byte

'Preferences'. Unless you're completely and utterly sure what you're doing, you should *never* change this setting. In the interests of experimentation, we attempted to 'undelete' a file on a CF disk, changing just *one byte*—the result was a corrupted disk and we eventually had to restore its contents from a backup. You have been warned.

Optimise

At first glance, Optimise seems like a great idea. In normal use, all computer disks get fragmented, with bits of files stored all over the disk's surface, as the operating system tries to keep up with the business of copying, moving and deleting files. With traditional hard disks, making the disk head dart to and fro picking up all the fragments of a specific file carries a significant speed penalty. The process of defragmentation, built into most modern operating systems, works wonders for performance by joining all the appropriate fragments together.

However, on a palmtop's solid state memory disk this makes little sense, as there are no moving parts and every part of a disk is as accessible as every other. Despite Optimise's claims, we've yet to encounter anyone who's observed a noticeable improvement in speed after running this utility.

Further reading

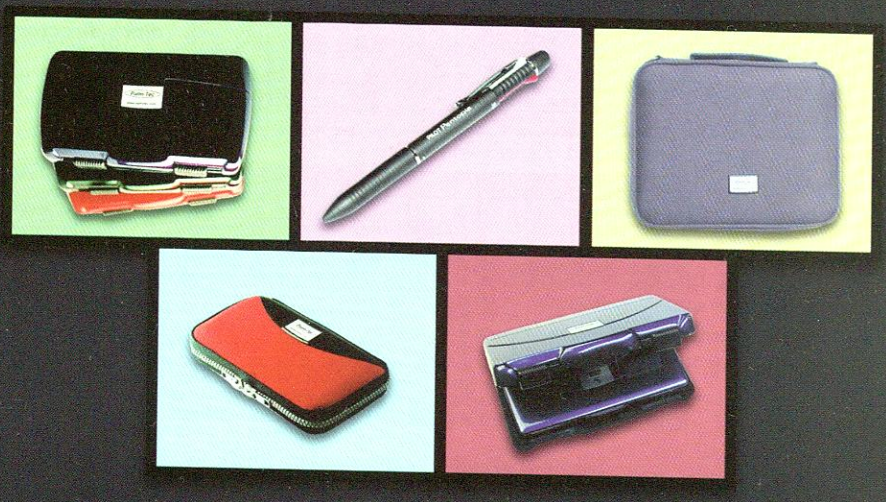
www.pscience5.net - Martin's 'Pscience5' site, which has full details of testing using SmartFormat with a number of popular CF disks.

www.fortunecity.com/skyscraper/babbage/399/index.html - the home of the 'DiskBench' utility, useful for measuring CF speeds.

www.expansys.com/k_epoc_flash_1.asp - Expansys' analysis of CF disks and SmartFormat.

8 great prizes to be won!!

FIVE PalmTec cases and THREE Triscribe
multi-function stylus pens worth almost £300 in total!



You choose your prize: any PalmTec case (including Pod hard cases for the Series 5/5mx in a range of metallic painted colours), Shell hard cases for the Revo in a range of metallic painted colours, Semi Rigid Cases for the Series 7/netBook, and funky neoprene cases in any one of three two-tone colours (available for any model), or multi-function Pentopia Triscribe pointers (suitable for all Psion models). All winners will also receive a free pack of PalmTec's colourful translucent plastic pointers for the Series 5/7 or the Revo.

All entries must be submitted by 30th April 2001. The decision of Palmtop Publications and PalmTec is final. Last issue's correct answers were: 1. Stephen King, 2. an NMEA data viewer, 3. a pilot.

Just answer the three questions below and submit them on the special page at PalmTec's web site on www.palmtec.com/palmtop.htm, where you will also be required to state your prize preference.

1. **What does EDU stand for?**
2. **What is the name of PalmTec's new Note-taking program?**
3. **Is a 'Shell' case hard or soft?**

Working with Word

In the fifth and final part of our series, we show you how to get the most from your Psion's powerful built-in word processor

by Steve Clack

Neatly formatted text-only documents are all very well, but in these modern times your recipients may be expecting a little more. Although your palmtop can't rise to genuine desktop publishing with text flowing around framed graphics, it's easy to insert simple 'inline' pictures.

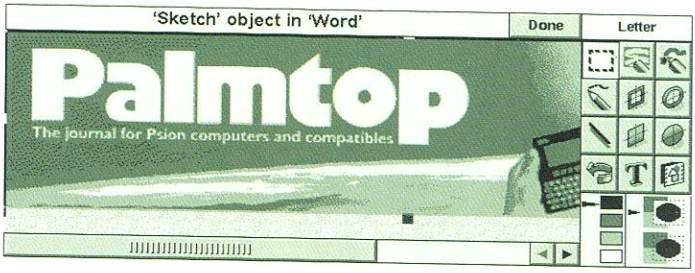
An attractive letterhead

To continue our example letter from Palmtop Publications, let's take one of our trademark masthead graphics and use it across the top of the page. It's important to work backwards from the limitations of both Word and Sketch, especially the latter's restriction to using just black, white and two shades of grey. Dragging and dropping a BMP image from Windows will produce a Sketch file on your palmtop, to be sure, but it usually pays to manipulate the image a little beforehand, on the desktop. In the example shown here, we changed the masthead to greyscale and reduced the number of shades in a graphics utility, before letting PsiWin do the final conversion to Psion Sketch format.

Note that if you don't use a PC, there are many other ways of achieving similar results. In particular, see our conversion feature on page 64.

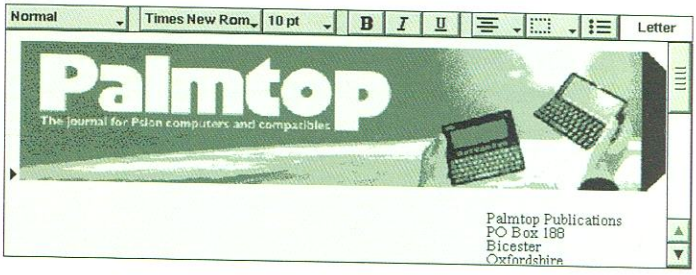
Inserting our picture

Before switching back to Word, we'll open up the new Sketch file on the Psion, using 'Select all' and 'Copy' to place a copy of the image on the EPOC clipboard. Notice that the image will be exactly the same size in pixels as it was on the desktop. In our example here, its width was 750 pixels, which EPOC uses at about the right size for our letter. If we'd wanted a graphic that was smaller or larger, it would have been better to 'resample' it properly on the desktop before conversion—although both Word and Sketch have simple resizing facilities, they're crude compared to dedicated desktop graphics software.



Pasting in and cropping our masthead into a Sketch object in Word

The masthead in place, here seen zoomed out slightly so that the text below can be seen



In Word, we can now insert a new, centre-aligned paragraph at the top of our letter and use 'Insert | Sketch'. Once inside the Sketch object, we need to paste in the contents of the clipboard. Sketch usually complains at this point that the item being pasted in is larger than the (default) canvas size and helpfully offers to increase the latter. Notice at this point that we've got quite a bit of white space around the pasted-in image, which should still be showing its 'selection handles'. Use 'Tools | Crop' to remove everything around the selection, and tap on 'Done'.

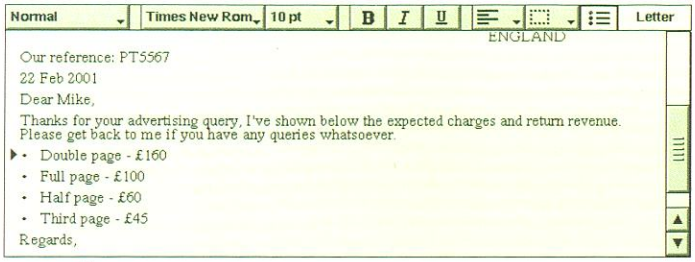
We now have a nicely sized (and reasonably attractive) masthead for our letter. If the limitation of four 'colours' seemed too restrictive for photographic images, we might want to consider using just 'line art' (clip art) instead, which is normally based around simple and bold pen strokes and areas of solid shading.

The same technique can be used for other embellishing graphics in Word documents, such as product photos, logos of official bodies or perhaps a closing signature.

Bullets and lists

Other common ways in which plain text documents may need extending are with lists and tables: columns of information spaced as needed to make their content clearer. Perhaps a list of products, descriptions and prices? Or a breakdown of expenses incurred? Or simply a list of what you received for Christmas?

If we simply need a list of items, the easiest approach is to use Word's 'Bullets' feature, tapping the button on the top toolbar. This automatically adds an extra indent to any affected paragraph, putting a 'bullet' of our choice to mark the start of each item in a list. As we type out the bulleted list's contents, notice that pressing [Enter] to



Using bulleted paragraphs to display a list of items

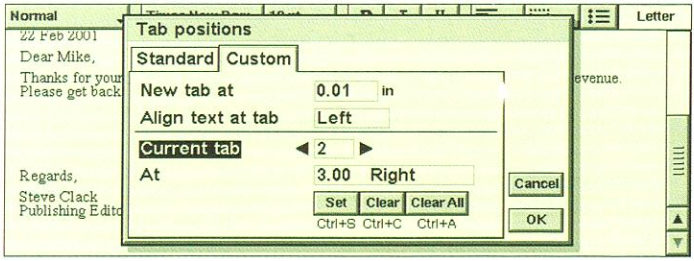
start a new paragraph behaves in Word's usual fashion, replicating the style and formatting settings of the previous paragraph, in this case setting up the new paragraph as a bullet as well.

Incidentally, the bullet character used can be changed and formatted as required using 'Paragraph | Bullets | Format...' Note also that when we've finished entering the list of items, another tap on the Bullets button on the top toolbar toggles the feature off.

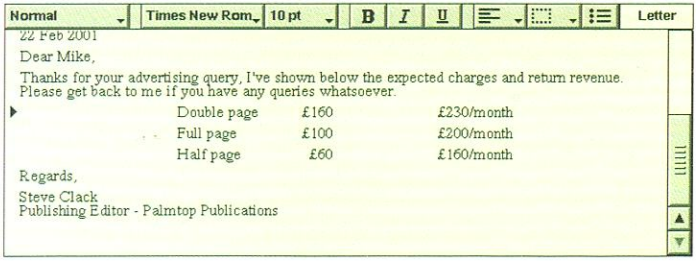
Custom tabs to the rescue

The next level of tabular presentation is using tabs themselves. Tabs are preset points along each physical line at which the next character will be 'aligned'. In this section of our document, we'll use 'Paragraph | Tab positions | Custom | Set' to set up tabs every 1.5 inches. Typing in our information, punctuated by a tap on the [Tab] key, then achieves the result shown below.

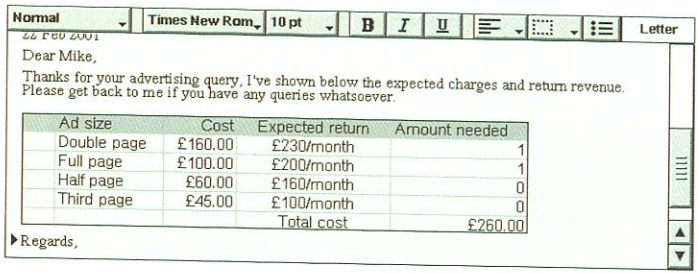
Note that the 'Tab positions | Custom' dialog isn't the most intuitive in the world, but experiment by setting and clearing a



Setting up custom tab positions


Normal
Times New Rom
10 pt
Letter
22 Feb 2001
Dear Mike,
Thanks for your advertising query, I've shown below the expected charges and return revenue.
Please get back to me if you have any queries whatsoever.
Double page £160 £230/month
Full page £100 £200/month
Half page £60 £160/month
Regards,
Steve Clack
Publishing Editor - Palmtop Publications

The finished, tabbed effect—note the right aligned numbers in the second column


Normal
Times New Rom
10 pt
B
I
U
Letter
Dear Mike,
Thanks for your advertising query. I've shown below the expected charges and return revenue.
Please get back to me if you have any queries whatsoever.
Ad size | Cost | Expected return | Amount needed
Double page | £160.00 | £230/month | 1
Full page | £100.00 | £200/month | 1
Half page | £60.00 | £160/month | 0
Third page | £45.00 | £100/month | 0
Total cost | £260.00
Regards,

Using an inserted Sheet object to provide a sophisticated table

Our letter, with masthead and table in place

few tabs and its operation should become fairly obvious. It helps enormously to plan beforehand, on a piece of paper, the tab positions needed and their alignment.

For an example of the latter, consider the second tabbed column of numbers in the screenshot at the bottom of the previous page, which we want right aligned. Once set up, typed text gets inserted *before* the tab, an effect which appears strange at first.

Sophisticated Sheet

For greater sophistication, we can use 'Insert graph' or 'Insert | Other object...' to insert a spreadsheet, as shown at the top of this page. This enables us to use such features as column/row shading and formatting, bordering lines where needed and, of course, formulae to calculate totals and summaries.

Just as when inserting the Sketch object earlier, the object is initially empty. In most realistic cases we'll want to paste in content that's stored elsewhere on the Psion, in this case perhaps a spreadsheet of our rates and prices. Don't try to achieve pixel-perfect formatting with embedded Sheet objects, by the way. A bug in EPOC means that borders in particular often don't print correctly and there's usually a degree of trial and error involved.

Note that the Sheet or Graph view last used in the inserted object is the one that will 'show through' into Word.

Confidence

This concludes our beginner's guide to Word and we hope you now feel equipped to tackle letters, reports and business correspondence with confidence. Issue 34 will see the start of a companion guide to Sheet.

Word perfect

Steve Clack examines the various Psion-based dictionaries and thesauri currently available

You don't have to be a professional writer in order to benefit from a good set of writer's tools. For those who engage in even occasional correspondence, a half-decent dictionary and thesaurus represent the minimum toolkit.

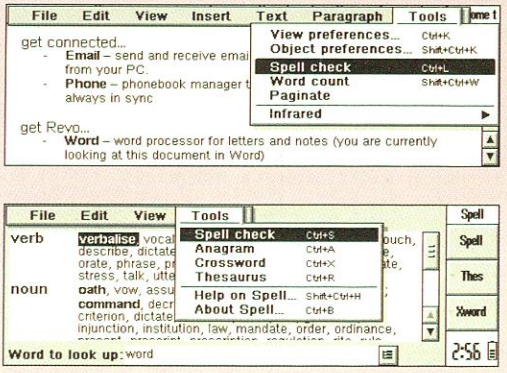
Dictionaries and dictionaries

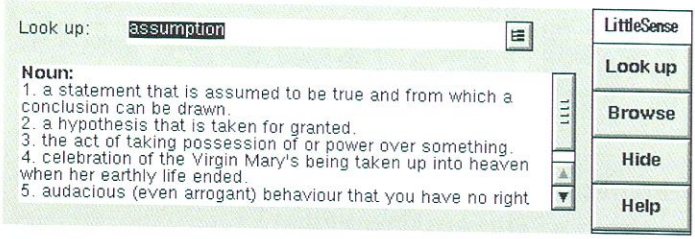
Psion-based dictionaries fall into two distinct categories.

First off there's the spell checking and thesaurus facility that's built into all EPOC models apart from the Revo. This works firstly via the standalone 'Spell' application for looking up the spelling of individual words, for finding synonyms (alternative words with similar meaning) using the 'Thesaurus' menu command, and as an aid for solving anagrams and crossword puzzles. The spell checking facility is also integrated into Word, using the same spelling dictionary to work through entire documents. This makes it the perfect tool for checking the accuracy of your spelling, but it doesn't provide the word definitions that you'd find in a paper dictionary, so you can't use it to look up the meaning of a word you're completely unfamiliar with.

Spell on the Revo

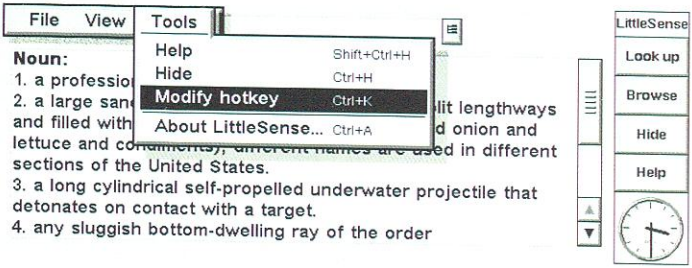
As mentioned already within the pages of Palmtop, the Psion spell checker and thesaurus aren't built into the ROM of the Revo range, but can be loaded separately from the supplied PsiWin CD. Just look in the '\Extras\Spell' directory, where you'll find a folder containing the spell.sis file for your particular language variant of the Revo, which will require around 1MB of free memory to install.




Look up: assumption
Noun:
1. a statement that is assumed to be true and from which a conclusion can be drawn.
2. a hypothesis that is taken for granted.
3. the act of taking possession of or power over something.
4. celebration of the Virgin Mary's being taken up into heaven when her earthly life ended.
5. audacious (even arrogant) behaviour that you have no right
LittleSense
Look up
Browse
Hide
Help

LittleSense runs well on the Revo, and takes only a megabyte of your precious memory

You can assign a hotkey to LittleSense, so it will automatically pop up the definition for a selected word



The other kind of dictionary works more like its paper equivalent, providing the ability to look up words and obtain a reasonably detailed explanation of what they mean. The most important point to note about this kind of dictionary is that none of those available for the Psion will integrate directly with the word processor, so you still have to use the built-in spell checker to give your Word documents their full once-over.

Add-on alternatives

There are currently several add-on dictionaries available for the Psion range, each with their own particular features and benefits:

LittleSense

A common feature with add-on reference works, not least dictionaries, is that they tend to take up a lot of storage space. If you're fairly tight on this, particularly if you have a Revo, then size may well be *the* most important factor. Necronomicon's LittleSense dictionary (reviewed in issue 26) is the smallest of those available, squeezing a lexicon of more than 52,000 words into a package only 1MB in size. It's also a bargain, at only £13 (from *www.necronomicon.co.uk*).

The 'dictionary' for LittleSense is based on the freely distributed WordNet Lexical Database for English, developed by Princeton University (see *www.cogsci.princeton.edu/~wn* for further background on this). It contains fairly terse, condensed versions of the standard WordNet definitions, with no pronunciation information and no examples to put the words into better context. These limitations are understandable, given that LittleSense is designed with compactness as its chief priority.

If you wish to look up the definition of a word from *any* other Psion application, LittleSense allows you to highlight it and then press a hotkey combination to switch back to LittleSense, going straight to the

definition for the highlighted word. This is a feature that none of the other dictionaries offer.

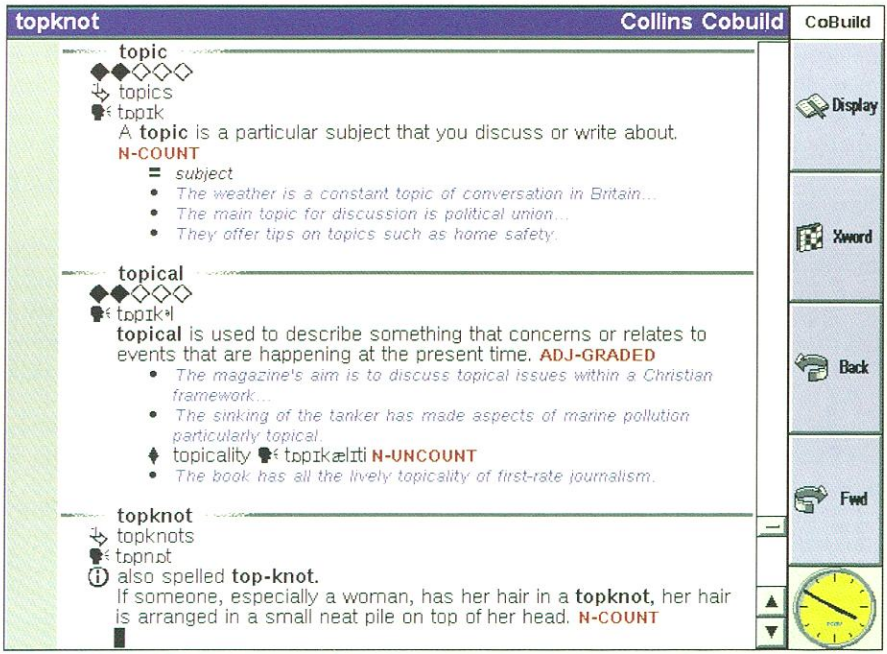
If you have a pretty good command of the English language then LittleSense is likely to serve you well. If you're learning English as a second language then you may prefer the Cobuild dictionary (detailed below), which offers more detail in its definitions and some help with pronunciation.

Collins Cobuild

PalmTop Software's Cobuild dictionary (reviewed in issue 27), based on the popular series of Collins books, boasts the greatest depth of any Psion-based dictionary. A full installation takes up almost 6MB of storage space, though there is a condensed installation option at a little over half that.

Even Collins Cobuild, with approximately 75,000 word definitions, isn't as comprehensive as a good paper-based dictionary, but as with all the products featured here, it's very much faster to look things up.

Beyond the LittleSense dictionary, Cobuild adds pronunciation guidelines, slightly more detailed definitions, cross-referencing of any word in the descriptive text to its definition in the dictionary, a reasonable selection of example phrases and even a rating system to show how frequently each word crops up in the English language—particularly useful for anyone learning English.


topknot
Collins Cobuild
CoBuild
topic
topics
tɒpɪk
A topic is a particular subject that you discuss or write about.
N-COUNT
= subject
• The weather is a constant topic of conversation in Britain...
• The main topic for discussion is political union...
• They offer tips on topics such as home safety.
topical
tɒpɪkəl
topical is used to describe something that concerns or relates to events that are happening at the present time. ADJ-GRADED
• The magazine's aim is to discuss topical issues within a Christian framework...
• The sinking of the tanker has made aspects of marine pollution particularly topical.
topicality tɒpɪkælɪti N-UNCOUNT
• The book has all the lively topicality of first-rate journalism.
topknot
topknots
tɒpnɒt
also spelled top-knot.
If someone, especially a woman, has her hair in a topknot, her hair is arranged in a small neat pile on top of her head. N-COUNT
Display
Xword
Back
Fwd

Collins Cobuild is the ultimate Psion-based dictionary, but can take up almost 6MB

On the downside, there's no hotkey word lookup facility, but there are two amusing and educational word games built in: Word Search (just like the popular puzzle book game) and Squish Man—similiar to Hangman.

Overall, Collins Cobuild is the most comprehensive dictionary solution, but there are still words that don't appear in Cobuild that *are* in LittleSense (and vice versa, of course). Both LittleSense and Collins Cobuild are available in British English only. Cobuild costs £40 from *www.palmtop.nl*.

TrueTerm

The TrueTerm dictionaries (reviewed in issue 27) are designed purely as translation dictionaries, covering English to Spanish, German, French, Italian, Portuguese, Dutch and Swedish), with each language purchased separately at £25 each and taking up to 3MB of storage space. In addition to the translation dictionaries though, the TrueTerm Thesaurus (reviewed in issue 30) is also available as a separate product in the same eight languages, plus US 'English', all at £20 each. The TrueTerm dictionaries do not provide detailed definitions of the words they cover, only short descriptions.

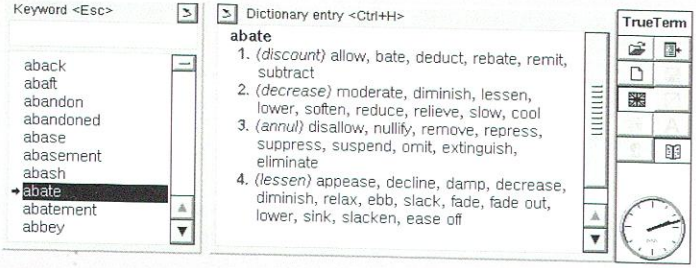
The TrueTerm Thesaurus offers synonyms for any selected word in the chosen language, in much the same way as Psion's own built-in thesaurus. Although it claims more than 200,000 entries for the UK English version, in many cases TrueTerm finds fewer synonyms for the same word, and some of them are of questionable validity.

All in all, the TrueTerm Thesaurus product provides little additional value if you already have the built-in Psion thesaurus for the desired language. If you need a foreign language thesaurus or translation dictionary for study purposes then the TrueTerm range is worth a look (available from *www.go32.com*).

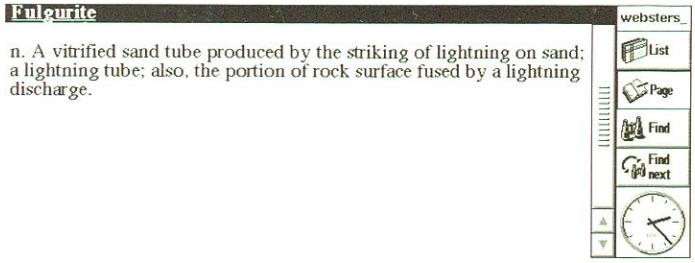
TomeRaider

As reviewed most recently in issue 29, PalmTec's TomeRaider software (£15, from *www.palmtec.com*) provides a means to view compressed documents and ebooks on Psion (and other) handheld and desktop computers. Aside from the reader software itself, there are now hundreds of free out-of-copyright reference works available in TomeRaider (TR) format, including a few dictionaries and a thesaurus.

Because written works generally don't fall out of copyright until 75 years after their initial release, some of the TR files are naturally not current editions, but there's still a useful selection available. The TomeRaider



The TrueTerm Thesaurus. Available in eight languages


Fulgurite
n. A vitrified sand tube produced by the striking of lightning on sand; a lightning tube; also, the portion of rock surface fused by a lightning discharge.
websters_
List
Page
Find
Find next

Webster's Abridged Dictionary of American English

viewing software allows for quick searching on any keyword, as well as the option of searching for text strings *within* each entry. Here are the main dictionary and thesauri currently available:

WordNet Dictionary - there are several versions available for free download, all using the same basic data set as the LittleSense dictionary, but with varying detail in definitions, dependent on size. The minimalist WordNet Mini weighs in at only 400K, with the most comprehensive and detailed option, WordNet Max, at almost 8MB. Both English language and US spellings are included.

Websters Abridged Dictionary - this 3MB dictionary offers broadly similar content to the WordNet dictionary, though being a US resource all the spellings are of course in American 'English'. There's also Webster's Encyclopaedia, which contains a number of good word definitions, and plenty of detail as you'd expect from such a work. Most useful, provided that you have 12MB of free space for it.

Jargon Dictionary - exactly what its name implies, this 600K file contains thousands of interesting and detailed definitions of English jargon terms, including many computing-related phrases—everything from 'emoticon' to 'FidoNet'.

Foldoc Computing Dictionary - even more comprehensive than the Jargon Dictionary when it comes to computing terms, this 2.6MB resource is a must-have for serious computer users, and even includes email addresses, web URLs and addresses for Usenet newsgroups and mailing lists that relate to topics covered therein. Highly recommended.

Roget's Thesaurus - another excellent resource. Aside from the synonyms, this classic work also includes brief dictionary definitions for each word. Roget's takes 2.3MB of space.

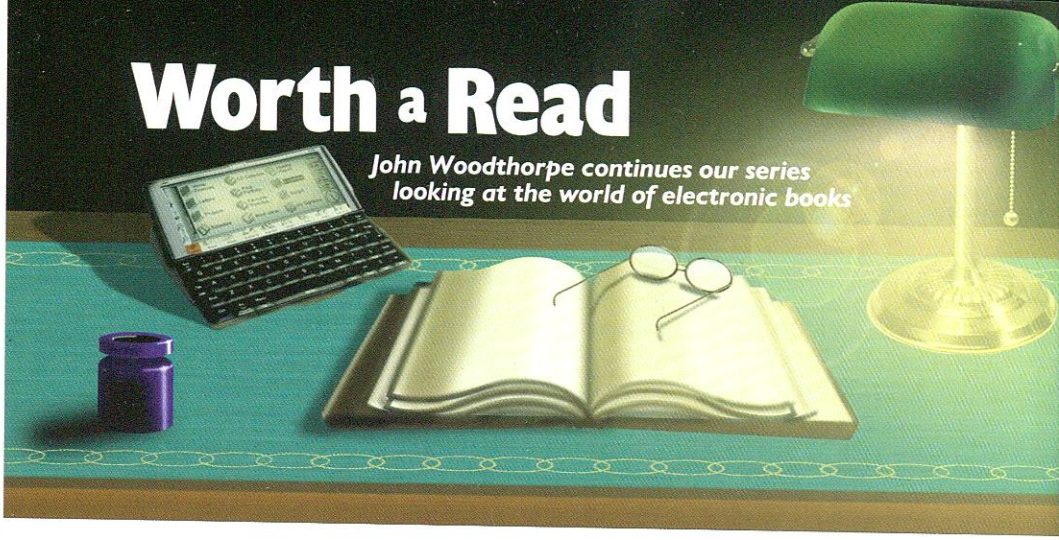
You'll find almost all of the TomeRaider files on recent editions of the Palmtop CD (in the 'Tomeraider' folder), or for download from *www.tomeraider.com* and *www.memoware.com*.

Something for everyone

Although none of the solutions given here are completely free, they do cover a broad spread of requirements and available memory. If you have a CompactFlash with plenty of free space then I'd wholeheartedly recommend trying some of the TomeRaider files described here, but if you just want the most comprehensive and polished Psion-based dictionary available then Collins Cobuild is currently the best bet.

Worth a Read

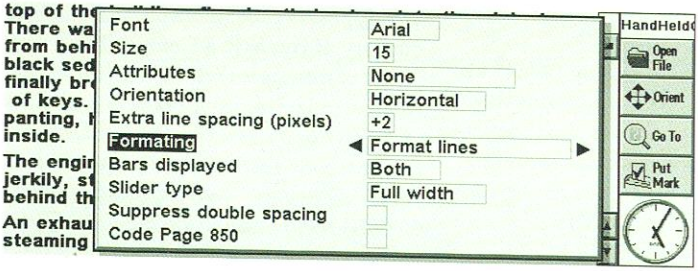
John Woodthorpe continues our series looking at the world of electronic books



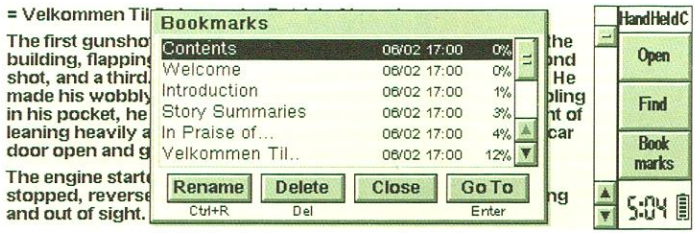
Readers revisited

The first article in this series (in issue 30) summarised the main ebook reader applications available. The two that will open the widest range of file formats are **VReader5** and **EBook**. Both will open plain text, Palm DOC and the TCR format created for Series 3 Reader. Both applications were free when they were first mentioned, but EBook has now become shareware. It nags gently for the first 30 days but then becomes more persistent. It costs £10 to register and has been actively developed over the last year or so. VReader5 went through intensive testing over its initial development period but hasn't changed much since then. In fact, Vreader5's author's web site seems to have disappeared now, leaving my own site (see URL on following page) as one of the few places still distributing it.

VReader5 was the first such application for the (then) new Series 5 and was welcomed eagerly by those who had moved from the Series 3 range and wanted an equivalent to Reader. It has a lot of the same features but can get a bit bogged down in rendering more complicated files. A read-ahead buffer that loads the next few pages into memory speeds up moving through files, but it is possible to defeat this by scrolling too quickly. At times, a page fails to redraw at all, needing a few presses of the [Esc] key to restore the screen.



VReader5 has lots of features...



...But EBook has even more

EBook has no such problems and is remarkably quick, even when processing compressed files. It will also preload any bookmarks embedded in a file, making it very quick to jump to sections of a large document. In addition, I've not found any untoward behaviour in EBook and have been very impressed with it.

There is even a version capable of displaying Japanese and Chinese texts, although it needs a Revo or Series 5mx in order to work.

I've tried to find something that VReader5 does that EBook can't, and all I've spotted is the ability to orient the text vertically in either direction. EBook will only let you choose between horizontal and vertical, with the screen on the right. In every other way, EBook is at least the equal of VReader5 and in many ways is much better. This goes especially for speed and stability. Bearing all this in mind, it has to be worth the registration fee if you read a lot of ebooks.

EBook is available from *www.geocities.com/ebookepoc* and you can get VReader5 from *www.armlink.ndirect.co.uk/vreader5.htm*

HandHeld Crime

Moving onto etexts themselves, I'd like to look now at a different kind of ebook, the HandHeld Crime series that I've used to demonstrate the two readers shown here. Part book and part magazine, it comes in DOC format. There are essentially two ways to get hold of the issues: subscribe to the (roughly) fortnightly email deliveries or download them from the archives at *www.handheldcrime.com* . Both methods are free of charge, and give you a document comprising a short story or two, articles and a number of reviews. The common theme is mystery fiction, with a crime element.

In common with other crime books and TV programmes, murder often features at some point in the stories. There's a lot of work put into each issue, with comprehensive introductions to the stories written by an invited guest, and the two editors do a great job of pulling everything together. If you read any of the Psion or ebook newsgroups or mailing lists, you will have found that you can't avoid HandHeldCrime's postings about their service, as they seem to find every possible way to promote themselves on the Internet. There are times when this does seem a little excessive, but given the quality of their product I can't really hold it against them. If you enjoy crime fiction, whether it's the traditional or more modern versions, there's something here for you. Definitely worth a read.

Hot tips for hot games

In this ongoing series, we invite a software author to share some winning tips and strategies

Revertris by beelogic

Fill the board from narrowest cells In the sample screen from

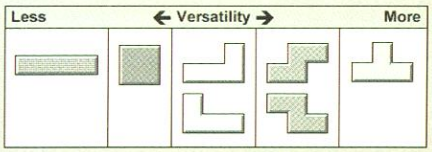
Overall lookup

It is quite useful to look at the remaining shape of the board from time to time (especially after doing a risky move), to help you spot structural problems, i.e. realising that filling certain areas is not feasible with the remaining tiles.

After finding such a problem, you should try to fix this (by resetting some tiles) before going any further, because problems are harder (and take longer) to fix with crowded boards and fewer tiles to play with.

Place less versatile tiles first

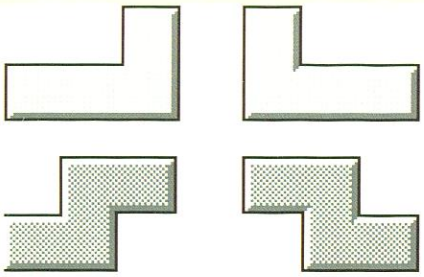
Keeping the above in mind, there's another important tip you should consider. The Revertris tileset consists of up to seven different shapes, some more versatile than others. This versatility is related to the capacity of each tile to be combined (ensembled with other tiles without giving dead cells or blanks). The image below shows the Revertris tileset, sorted in order of versatility, with the less versatile tiles first.



Based on this, it's wise to place the less versatile tiles first, keeping the more versatile ones for the end of the level, when there are less tiles to place and things are getting harder.

Avoid errors

Mis-placing a tile is one of the most time-consuming errors in Revertris. There are four tiles to take particular care with, in particular, because (being so similar) they're easy to confuse, as shown in the image at the top right of this page.

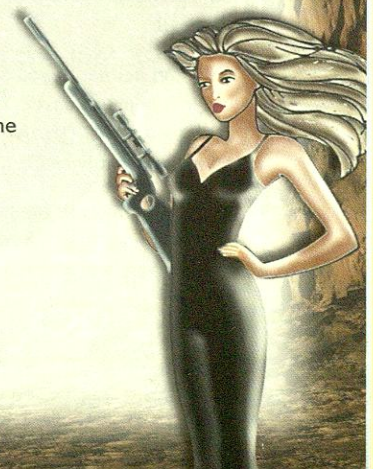


Don't be fooled by these pairs. Although they look like rotations of the same tile, they're not (draw them on a piece of paper, cut them out and you'll see).

Battle against time

Time should be a major concern. Optimise the time you spend on each level by:

- Select the lowest speed setting (under 'Preferences').
- Start from low/easy levels. This will help you build up more time credits to spend in more challenging situations (the counter holds up to 30 minutes).
- Don't let the counter tick unattended. Pause the game when you feel tired or confused. There isn't a special control to pause the game, but it will be suspended automatically as soon as you press the [Menu] key, ask for help or switch to another application. The game is resumed as soon as you come back to the board.



On the NET

Our regular look at what's happening online, and where to point your browser

by Pete Sipple

Software cracks

Discussion of software 'hacks' and 'cracks' pops up quite regularly across the Usenet. If you're new to the terminology, a 'cracker' is someone who will try to break shareware registration keys to use software without paying. At the beginning of February, a message appeared that started a whole tirade of responses, inflaming the online community. Here's the first message, plus the responses...

"Send me your disks and CDs and I will crack them all for £20. For £30 I will crack them twice. For £50 I will grind them further. For other media, inc. CompactFlash, email me for a quote." (govinder.jassel@virgin.net)

"...this sort of thing shouldn't be on this forum in the first place. Pay for your share, it's cheap enough. Why bring this criminal element everything decent?" (address withheld)

"The police now have your email address 'cos you posted that. Oh dear. Fool." (address withheld)

"Guys, can neither of you see that the original poster is being sarcastic, i.e. he will physically crack their disks. Did the part about grinding them not give it away?" (tjf31@cam.ac.uk)

"Yes I get it, but I bet the police may still check it out. They use a search string with such words in it. So there you go." (address withheld)

"If only we did have squads of Internet cops roaming the newsgroups removing spammers, etc. Unfortunately we don't, and just using the words 'crack', 'grind', etc. is unlikely to get you bumped off your ISP." (duncan@oisl.co.uk)

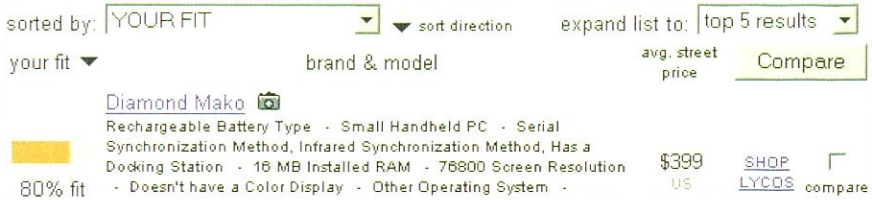
"The authorities also search for other words like 'bomb', 'explosives' and 'firearms'. So they're definitely watching this thread now!!" (a.dye@ee.leeds.ac.uk)

*"I thought the original post was mildly amusing but the responses are hilarious. But now I am confused as to whether the respondents are actually taking the p***. Surely they are not serious?" (mge@totalise.co.uk)*

The final word from the original poster: *"...Bill Gates emailed me. He wants me to glue some cracked CDs to a CompactFlash to make Windows ME for the Psion 5mx. Oh - by the way, I forgot to mention my hammer is neither endorsed by Microsoft or Psion, but I do offer a 10% discount to employees of software houses, and 15% to employees of Psion." (govinder.jassel@virgin.net)*

Hotspots

PsionPlace - If you're looking for busy discussion groups, PsionPlace is worth a look. As well as the usual news and reviews, you'll find some varied and busy discussion groups here, plus the option to be informed by email when your favourite shareware program gets updated. PsionPlace is under

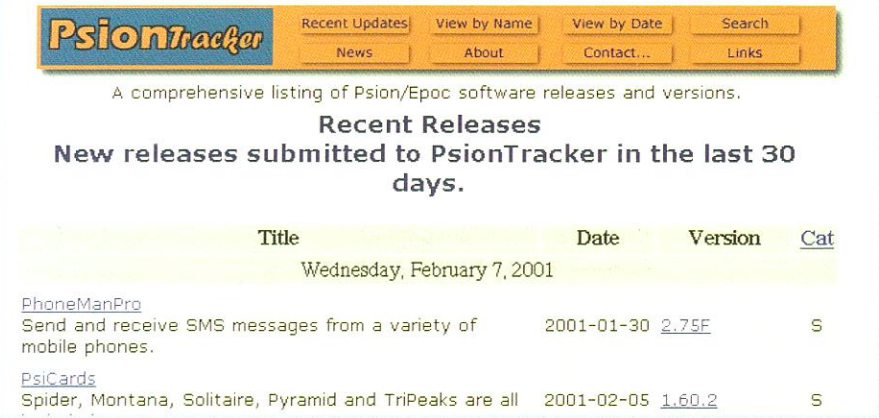

sorted by: YOUR FIT
sort direction
expand list to: top 5 results
your fit
brand & model
avg. street price
Compare
Diamond Mako
Rechargeable Battery Type - Small Handheld PC - Serial Synchronization Method, Infrared Synchronization Method, Has a Docking Station - 16 MB Installed RAM - 76800 Screen Resolution - Doesn't have a Color Display - Other Operating System -
80% fit
$399 US
SHOP LYCOS
compare

the wider umbrella of PDAStreet.com, who also have web sites related to Palm and Pocket PC handhelds. This shows through with some rather odd cut-and-paste errors throughout the site, such as their Frequently-Asked-Questions page, which answers the question: "Is this site run by Psion, PLC?" as follows: "No. We are totally independent of 3Com and are not affiliated with, or represent them in any way. PSION Place simply provides a free environment for users of Palm-related products to interact on the Internet." *www.psionplace.com*

PsionTracker - This is an impressive looking site that's been running for several months now. Free from the clutter of news and chatrooms, this resource has just one purpose—to keep a list of current software releases. You can sort by date or product name, and see current version number, a brief summary of the program and a link to the author's site. Simple and, if you know what you're after, very useful. *www.psiontracker.com*

Pick up a perfect palmtop

Time to upgrade? If you're thinking about buying a new handheld, there's an easy way to check online whether a Psion still suits your needs. Lycos offers an online 'advisor' that prompts you for your memory requirements, screen preference and connectivity needs, and then recommends the best purchase for you. After answering a few sensible, simple questions, I was told that the machine best suited to my lifestyle is a Diamond Mako (SonicBlue's rebadged Revo Plus). Not bad! Give it a try yourself at *www2.decide.lycos.com*



Hints & Tips

Every item published in this section wins the author TWO free issues added to their subscription!

Themed To-do's in Day view

With a little exploration of Agenda on my Series 5mx, I've been able to not only have my To-do's listed on the left hand side of my Agenda Day view but also group them together according to theme.

The more obvious part is to configure Agenda's Day view to show (for example) slots of 01:00 am to 08:00 am on the left page and 8:00 am to midnight on the right. My To-do's will then show up in the left page when the day is set to 'today' (pressing the spacebar will always take me to the current day from any other date).

Slightly less obvious is that within 'To-do list preferences', the 'Standard position in other views' can be set to a specific time. By setting each To-do list to show up at a different time, items can be displayed in groups, as shown in the screenshot below.

Dr. Kallay Krisztian, Budapest, HUNGARY

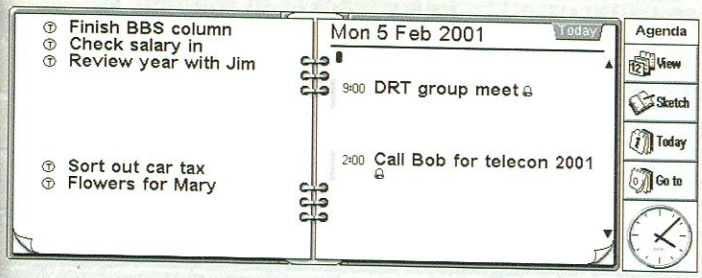
For more Agenda tips, see our feature on page 59.

Series 5mx to 3mx will go

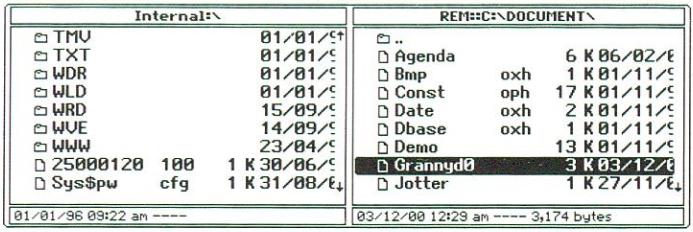
In an attempt to get my old Series 3mx talking directly to my new 5mx, and having abandoned infrared as completely incompatible, I have discovered a solution. I connected the two together using their PsiWin cables and a 'null modem' and then turned on the 'Remote link' at both ends. After matching the speeds (at 115200), I found that I could see the directories (folders) on the Series 5mx with the 3mx's File manager application and I successfully transferred a number of files.

Long file names were truncated to fit the (DOS) 8.3 naming format, spaces in filenames were replaced with an underscore and of course there was still the issue of converting the file formats concerned, but at least it worked. Unfortunately, EPOC's file browser can't see external drives across the link like the older Psion's software can, so everything has to be driven from the Series 3mx.

Chris Watts, via Internet



Themed To-do's in Agenda's Day view



A Series 5mx's files, seen from a Series 3mx!

Quick alarms

When in Agenda you can set an alarm or disable it quickly, simply by highlighting the entry and pressing [Ctrl]+[A]. This works in all views, and saves editing the entry and then tapping on 'Alarm/More...', etc.

Vince Smith, Arlington, Tennessee, USA

Seeding Opera bookmarks

To save time online, it's easy to 'seed' Opera's bookmark list. Simply navigate on the System screen to 'C:\System\Apps\Opera' and open up the file Bookmark.ini. Depending on your configuration, either Word or (better) Symbian's Editor (*www.symbiandevnet.com*) will launch and you'll be able to add your own URLs and edit existing ones.

The first line contains just '1' (for reasons known only to itself) and each pair of subsequent lines then contains a bookmark's name and address, as shown below.

'Sibo', via Internet

Extended snooze

If you love to spend as much time as possible in bed and find the five minute snooze option (hitting the space bar when ringing) on the Psion alarm just too short, you can increase the snooze time by another five minutes by hitting the space bar again. In fact, every time you hit the space bar another five minutes will be added on, up to a maximum of an hour.

Sent in by Psion Technical Support

Dust free

If, like me, you hate your Revo's screen gathering dust while 'docked' and recharging, note that you can plug the mains lead directly into the back of the closed Revo instead, saving the docking station for times when you need the PC connectivity.

Peter Douglas, Exeter

Editing Opera's bookmarks file

```
1
Palmtop magazine - HOME page
http://www.palmtop.co.uk/palmtop.htm
BBC News | FRONT PAGE | front page
http://news.bbc.co.uk/text_only.stm
```

Bookmark.
Spell
Find
Find next
5:24

Q&A

Get your Psion and EPOC-related questions answered by our editorial panel...

The perpetual PsiWin problem

Q I have severe problems with PsiWin. It nearly always takes several attempts to get a connection, usually involving turning the Psion on and off, the Remote link on and off and eventually the desktop computer on and off. Many times the 'squiggly line' is present at the bottom right hand corner of the screen but 'My Psion' refuses to recognise that it is connected.

I could not manage without my Psion, but I am becoming increasingly frustrated by the instability of the PsiWin link. I have tried the (latest) version supplied with my wife's Revo but that doesn't seem to be any better.

John Ingrey, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire

A **This is a common problem and has been answered (in various contexts) in many previous issues (e.g. see issue 29's Q&A).**

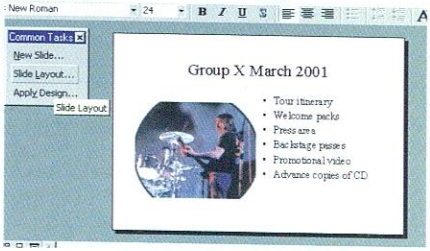
Yes, the PsiWin/Windows combination can be very unreliable on some systems, but unfortunately the only people who can fix the bugs are Psion and Symbian. If you experience problems, please complain direct to Psion, preferably in writing. Our best recommendation is to always ensure that you're running the latest version of PsiWin, and check the news section of each issue of Palmtop for details of updates and patches.

PowerPoint conversion

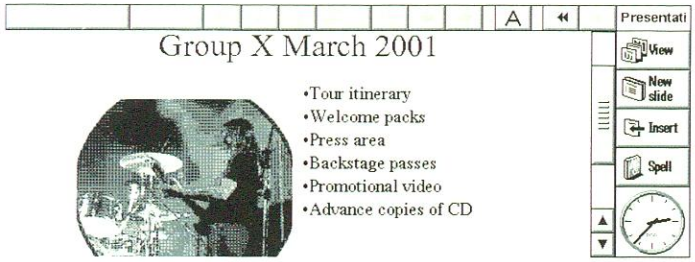
Q When I bought my Psion Series 7, I was assured that all programs designed for the Psion 5 would run on the 7. I bought Presentation Maker, which works fine on the Psion, but I cannot convert files from/to PowerPoint on my desktop PC. The statement on the box says that it should work! Psion in The Netherlands haven't been any help at all.

Christina Vandenbroucke-Grauls, Utrecht, THE NETHERLANDS

A **Virtually all Series 5 programs will run on the Series 7 (with the obvious caveats that some won't be designed to take full advantage of the larger screen). We tested Presentation Maker (PM) and it worked perfectly. Normally it comes on two floppy disks, the second of which contains a Windows Setup file. When run, this adds support for PM to the**



Editing a presentation on the PC...



...and again on the Psion, after conversion

standard PsiWin file conversion system. If necessary, try reinstalling PsiWin and then reinstalling the PM add-in.

To convert a Microsoft PowerPoint file, just drag and drop it onto your Psion. The default conversion will be to the PM document format. To convert in the other direction, you need to 'Export...' a presentation to a named file on your palmtop, which can then be dragged and dropped back onto the desktop, with PsiWin again handling the conversion.

Conversion limitations

Q I have a problem transferring embedded Sketch files within Word to my PC. They print out normal size when I 'Print via PC', but when I convert to Microsoft Word 97 and then print from there they are very small and cannot be seen.

Mark Hunter Purvis, Blaydon-on-Tyne, Tyne & Wear

A **We tried to duplicate your problem and did indeed get some images that were under half their expected size, relative to the text around them. It seems to be an issue with PsiWin's Word conversion routines, although we'd emphasise that working with the same 'graphics-rich' document on both platforms is almost certain to end in frustration. The internals of the two word processors are very different and it makes sense to use the Psion just to enter text on the move, using the basic range of styles and formatting to keep things organised. If you're intending to finish the document on the desktop, you'll generally get better results by transferring and converting any graphics files separately and then inserting them directly in Microsoft Word.**

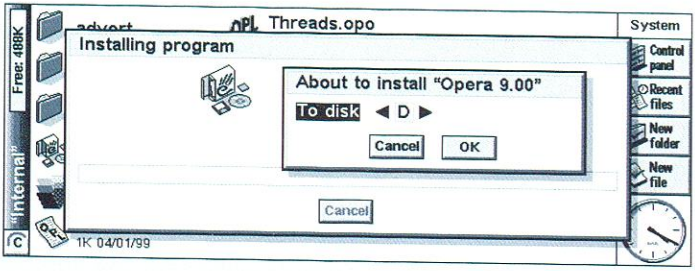
Memory munchers

Q I have just upgraded from a Psion 3mx to a 5mx. I have been installing a few 'essentials' (Opera, Java, nConvert, etc.) and find myself horribly short of memory after just a month of use! Is it possible to move the real 'memory munchers' onto a CF disk?

Dave Taylor, via the Internet

A **Yes, in theory. Almost every EPOC application can be run from CF disk, with the possible practical exception of those that create and use lots of small files, in which case performance may be a problem.**

If you feel very confident about manipulating files and folders within \System



Installing the Opera web browser onto CompactFlash disk

then you might simply try moving files from \System\Apps\Programname on the internal (C) disk to a folder of the same name on the CF disk (D). However, you do run the risk of confusing not only EPOC but the application itself, which may have made a note of where it was last run from and the location of its configuration files.

A better strategy is to use the standard 'Control panel | Add/remove' function to de-install the applications concerned, then installing again from the original SIS files but choosing disk 'D' as the destination this time around. Opera and Java, both big 'memory munchers', can definitely both be installed safely onto CF disk.

Word corrupt

Q One of my Psion Word files, of 16,547 bytes in size, is coming up with the error message 'Information. Corrupt'. Tapping on the 'Continue' button then takes me straight back to the System screen. Unfortunately, as I last amended the file a few weeks ago, I have in the meantime also affected my backup copy (on CF disk, as I don't use a desktop PC). Is there any way to recover the situation?

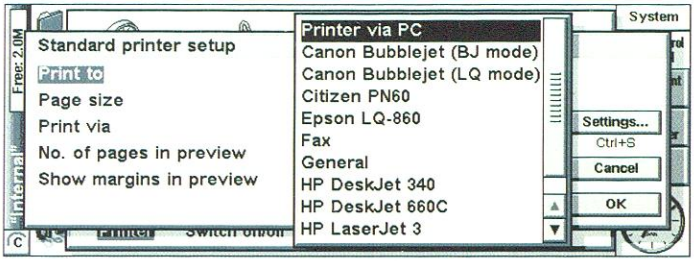
Rune Gustavsen, Drammen, NORWAY

A Internal corruption in an EPOC document file is fortunately quite a rare occurrence, although you've obviously been unlucky. The file's size is suspiciously close to an exact power of two and we can only surmise that some obscure Word bug has kicked in.

Whatever the reason, you'll have found that the file itself is unusable in its current form. The good news is that you'll almost certainly be able to extract much of the textual content by opening the corrupt file in a plain text editor such as Symbian's freeware Editor (see issue 30, page 11), highlighting the bit you want and copying it to the clipboard.

There's a moral here, by the way, applying to any computer system. When relying on backups, make sure you have more than one, preferably in a different location, and every so often take archive copies of your backups—just in case!

You might also like to take a look at our feature on Essential Disk Utilities on page 75, which includes coverage of memory/disk corruptions.



Selecting a 'standard' printer type

Check that printer!

Q I find, when using Jotter on my Ericsson MC218, that the default font is Arial and yet this is not selectable in the Font dialog. When applying any formatting the font is changed to Courier and I can't change it back. Am I missing anything?

Jamie Haslam, Harrogate, North Yorkshire

A **Yes, you probably have your printer set up as 'General', which only supports a mono-spaced font. Go to 'Control panel | Printer' (to make the change globally) and Jotter's own 'Print setup' to choose a more capable printer type, such as 'Print via PC'.**

Cross-platform beaming

Q My work colleague has a Psion 5mx and I use a Palm IIIx. Is there any way that we can beam information between the two? All our attempts to date have failed.

Simon Perry, Claregate, Wolverhampton

A **Yes, there are several ways in which you can beam things between Palm OS and EPOC (Release 5), although the flow of information is a little one-sided and you're slightly limited in what you can receive from your colleague.**

The best 'fit' between the two is for EPOC's Contacts and Palm OS's Address Book. Both of these fully support the IrOBEX exchange standard and so specific entries can be beamed in either direction. For bulk exchange of contacts, you're effectively limited to going from Palm OS to EPOC, by beaming an entire category at once. If you do this, note that EPOC takes a while to process the received data —the Psion hasn't crashed, it's simply 'thinking'.

Beaming contact details from an EPOC palmtop...

...to a Palm OS handheld

Although, in theory, EPOC's Agenda application should be able to beam appointments and To-do entries into another palmtop, it only seems to work with other EPOC devices. Beaming Date Book appointments and To Do List entries from a Palm, on the other hand, works a treat, and items are properly received by EPOC (into the appropriate sections of its Agenda).

To transfer general blocks of text (in theory, up to 4000 characters or so), simply make up a dummy Contacts (or Address Book) entry and paste the required text into the (last, if there are more than one, under EPOC) Notes field. Once received, just copy the text out of Contacts (or Address Book), pasting in where needed.

As we went to press, a new inter-palmtop utility was released. plBeam adds a number of beaming features to EPOC. See *www.psiloc.com*

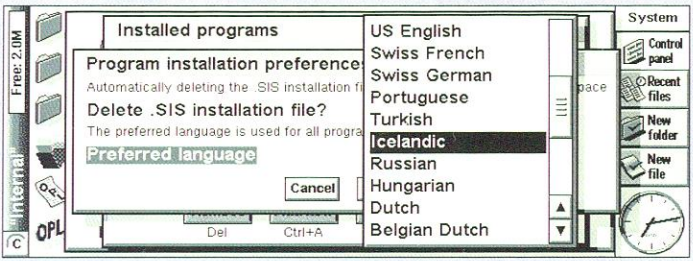
INSTALLATION PROBLEMS?

Broken PsiWin install?

Q When I try to install third party applications onto my Series 7, PsiWin's install program freezes at the 'Checking dependencies' message. Curiously, if I transfer the appropriate SIS files onto my Psion and then tap on them from there, installation works fine, apart from occasionally setting up the program in the wrong language. Is my copy of PsiWin broken and why don't I get the chance to specify the language version that's needed?

A **The 'Checking dependencies' hang is a known problem in PsiWin when trying to install to a Series 7 or netBook, and is also known to crop up when installing to a Revo or Revo Plus.**

In addition, as you've found, an unrelated bug in EPOC itself means that installing from SIS files on the Psion itself bypasses their normal language selection feature, taking instead your 'Preferred language' (found in 'Control panel | Add/remove | Prefs') if it finds a match in the installation file. By setting 'Preferred language' to something less common (e.g. 'Icelandic') you can force EPOC to stop and ask which language you really want.



Setting up a default language within EPOC's installation system

Wrong OPX?

Q After installing an application on my Series 5mx, I get an error message along the lines of '\System\opx\xxxxxxx.opx - incompatible OPX version'

A **This can happen for a variety of reasons, usually because the newer version of an OPX library file contained in the application hasn't overwritten an existing older version. This can happen if another program is already open and using the OPX, or if it hasn't followed the Symbian guidelines and has installed the original OPX without letting the EPOC operating system know, so you now have two copies: one on disk C and one on disk D. The solution is to remove all copies of the OPX from either disk (look in \System\OPX) and then to reinstall the application.**

Add/remove broken

Q When I tap on 'Control panel | Add/remove' my Psion palmtop resets itself.

A **This is due to a rogue file that's somehow become copied into the \System\Install folder on one of your disks. Take a close look and delete anything that doesn't have a '.SIS' extension. If you still have problems then it'll be one of the 'stub' SIS files that's corrupt and to blame. Start deleting the most likely offenders until the reset problem goes away.**

Thanks to RMR software for their help in compiling this section

Musings...

Debbie Barham takes a satirical look at all the Psions she's owned and loved over the years

I used to think some of my friends were geeky for recalling different periods in their lives by whatever music happened to be in the charts at the time (as in "ah yes! 1976. Gimme Gimme Gimme A Man After Midnight. That's when I broke up with Frank"). Obviously, they were geeky. But then, to my horror, I realised how I recall different periods in my life: at least since the early 1990s. By whatever Psion I happened to be dependent upon at the time ("ah, yes! 1996. The Siena. That's when I broke up with Frank... 'cos that wretched machine broke down with his phone number inside it").

But being both an upgrade freak (like Jack Nicholson—I always have to be seen with the latest model) and butterfingers (equally akin to Jack Nicholson, I tend to drop them after about a week), I've ploughed through Psions at an alarming rate. I'm probably responsible for GBH on more PDAs than any company's in-house testing lab. Open invitation to anyone at Psion wishing to bench test the robustness of a new product—not that they ever seem to have bothered in the past—don't strap it down and thwack it with a hammer, just leave it with me for a day or two. By the time you get it back, it'll look like someone's used it as a battering ram. But hey, if they call it a battery operated device, what do they expect? It's not that I intentionally inflict cruelty on these poor benighted bits of technology, but the sleeker and more streamlined the design, the more it facilitates slithering through one's pinkys. You want to know how long my Palm V lasted? Clue: I never needed more than the Week View in its diary.

So what it all boils down to is that I've had more Psions than Mick Jagger has had children, and probably spent just as much on maintenance. In the interests of nostalgia, then, here's a little trip through history, recalling those I have loved and lost. For anyone new to the world of Psion, think of this as an educational feature. Others are hereby permitted to get misty-eyed with nostalgia.

Series 3 (1993 – 1994)

We were together for over a year, and I still feel guilty about the breakup (rightly so: if I hadn't sat so clumsily on the hinge, the keyboard never would have split with its

Better Half—the Screen). How I sobbed when it went to meet its maker, only to discover that even Psion couldn't do anything to save it. Fittingly, its remains received a decent burial, six feet down in my desk drawer crammed in with the receipts for my next Psion...

Series 3a (1994 – 1995)

Fickle woman that I am, I soon had a new focus for my affections. And the 3a had one big attraction. "I suppose a quick fax is out of the question?" Not any more. Nor was email. Oh, how I flaunted it in my new leather holster. And oh, how I kicked myself when a sexy young charmer turned out to be a scummy young juvenile delinquent who picked up not me, but my beloved new kit. I saw it again, briefly, at the Computer Exchange ("We Do Not Buy Stolen Goods!"), but by then my head had been turned by the...

Series 3c (1996 – 1998)

A backlit screen! Colleagues were (luminous) green with envy. Result: my annual expenditure on Duracell AA-size rose to marginally more than my mortgage. Eventually the excitement wore off, along with the lettering on the keys (as it neared its dotage it boasted not only a 'Men' key, but also a QUIP keyboard).

Siena (Jan 1997 – Feb 1997)

It was when I dallied with the Siena that I realised I had a problem. Like Catherine Zeta Jones and Michael Douglas, the phrase "you could do so much better" sprang immediately to mind (applied not to me, obviously, but to Psion's designers). The Siena was clearly built by dummies and tested by someone with fingertips the size of pinheads, which may explain what happened to Edward Scissorhands at the end of the movie: he gave up topiary in favour of product prototyping with Psion plc). But it was another new machine, and I had to have it. I've still got it. I can't get rid of it.

Series 5 (1998 – 1999)

This was more like it: a real keyboard, decent memory, sensitivity when touched (a rare quality in human partners) and it naturally became my constant companion. Sadly, the S5 perished on the operating table when I attempted to save sixty quid by fitting my own customised 'Platinum' case. It became—frankly—unhinged. As did I, deprived of my diary, contacts and, most vitally, a means to play Tetris at work. Suffice it to say that I've plenty of spare parts for my...

Series 5mx (1999 -)

What can I say? We've been together for over a year. We have so many happy memories—a whole 16MB of them. And even the charms of Palm or the lure of a Handspring can't turn my head.

And the future? I know my current machine isn't "the one", and will, eventually, be usurped by some new rival. Though I can tell you now that it won't be the...

Series 7 (2001)

...Which makes a damn fine paperweight. For the £700 invoice that came with it. Don't tell my 5mx, but I wonder if they'll exchange it for that rather fanciable little Sony laptop?

Debbie Barham (deb@joke-shop.com) writes regularly for the BBC, the Sun and the London Evening Standard. She is currently working on a cure for gadget-addiction and a new Carlton TV sitcom.

Glossary

Application bar - The touch-sensitive strip along the edge of most EPOC screens, from which selected built-in applications can be launched.

Browser - Application for navigating the World Wide Web, running on any computer platform.

C++ - An efficient high level programming language now used for the majority of commercial EPOC applications. Much harder to learn than OPL, but more powerful and usually gives more compact, faster code.

CF - See **CompactFlash**.

Commercial software - Software produced by full-time programming companies, most often supplied in pre-packaged form.

CompactFlash - Small solid-state memory expansion modules, as used in all current EPOC devices except the Revo. See the 'Inside CompactFlash' feature in issue 17 of *Palmtop*.

Control panel - Invoked by pressing [Crtl]+[S] from the System screen on EPOC devices, showing a list of system control functions such as screen and keyboard settings, printer and dialling preferences, etc.

Crystal - A new category of EPOC communicators featuring half-VGA landscape format screen and full keyboard, due for release sometime in 2001.

Diamond Mako - A rebadged version of the Psion Revo Plus, marketed by SONICBlue in the USA.

Download - To transfer a file from an Internet web site or FTP site onto your palmtop or desktop computer.

EIKON - The 'front end' interface used on all current EPOC devices, that governs the position and appearance of menus, icons, dialog boxes, etc.

Embedding - The act of placing a Spreadsheet, Sketch, Sound object, etc. *within* another EPOC document.

Emulator - A program that mimics the operation of one computer operating system on another. PC-based emulators are available for both SIBO and EPOC devices.

EPOC - Term used to describe the operating system used on the Series 5 range of palmtops and all other current models. Not actually an acronym, EPOC was coined from 'Epoch', being touted as a new 'era' in handheld operating systems.

EPOC Connect - Known to Psion owners as PsiWin, this is the name given to Symbian's connectivity software when bundled with devices such as those made by Ericsson and Oregon Scientific. Functionally almost identical to equivalent PsiWin versions.

ER1/ER2/ER3 - EPOC Release 1/2/3. The first major versions of the EPOC operating system, as employed on the original Series 5 'Classic' and Geofox One.

ER4 - EPOC Release 4. An update of the EPOC operating system employed only (to date) on the Oregon Scientific Osaris.

ER5 - EPOC Release 5. Currently the latest version of EPOC, as used on the Series 5mx, Series 7, netBook, Revo and Ericsson MC218.

ER6 - EPOC Release 6. Due for commercial release sometime in the first half of 2001.

Flash - Another term for 'flash memory' devices, such as **CompactFlash** and flash **SSD**.

Freeware - Software that is supplied or made downloadable free of charge. The author/programmer makes no charge for its use, but usually offers no warranties on its stability or performance.

FTP - File Transfer Protocol. FTP sites are sometimes used instead of World Wide Web (WWW) sites as a repository for files and data and web content. Special 'FTP client' software is required to upload files to FTP sites.

Geofox One - The first non-Psion EPOC device, introduced in late 1997. Geofox ceased trading one year later after selling only around 1000 units. See issue 15 of *Palmtop* for a full review.

a guide to some common technical terms

GPS - Global Positioning System. A GPS receiver is a small handheld device that can pinpoint your physical location anywhere in the world with an accuracy of a few metres, by triangulating its position from military satellites in orbit. Some GPS receivers can be connected to EPOC devices with suitable software and cables. See issue 19 for most recent coverage in *Palmtop*.

GSM - Global System for Mobile telecommunications. A widely adopted worldwide communications standard for mobile telephones. Largely absent within the USA.

GUI - Graphical User Interface, such as the EIKON system used on EPOC devices, utilising windows, icons, menus, etc. Was preceded by the Command Line Interface (CLI), as used on DOS-based PCs of the 1970-80s.

Honda connector - The small flat connector used to plug an RS232 (Serial) cable into current EPOC devices.

HTML - HyperText Markup Language. The simple scripting system used to create World Wide Web (WWW) pages.

Icon bar - See **application bar**.

Infrared - Wireless communication technique used to transfer data between suitably equipped palmtops and printers/modems, etc. All EPOC devices are equipped with infrared capability.

IrDA - Infrared Data Association. A group set up to form standards for infrared data exchange, and the term used to describe the resulting standard currently employed. All EPOC devices conform to the IrDA standard, but earlier infrared-equipped Psion Series 3 devices do not, and are thus normally unable to communicate with other IrDA devices.

ISP - Internet Service Provider. Companies set up to provide Internet access via a dial-up system.

Java - A high level programming language designed to create programs that will run, without modification, on several computing platforms, such as PC, Macintosh, Unix and EPOC. See *Palmtop* issues 25-27 for a detailed feature on Java.

Javascript - An interpreted programming language, often used to add extra functions to web pages, such as interactive buttons and pop-up menus.

MacConnect - Psion's nearest EPOC equivalent to PsiWin for the Apple Macintosh, but offering only backup, restore and software installation, with no file conversions or synchronization.

Macro - A series of keystrokes, 'recorded' and 'played back' by a suitable utility program to automate commonly-performed tasks.

MBM - Multi BitMap. EPOC's standard picture format.

MC218 - Ericsson's 'clone' of the Series 5mx. Fully compatible with the Series 5mx and capable of running all software designed for the Series 5 range. Reviewed in *Palmtop* issue 24 and 26.

Message Suite - Psion's combined Email and Web applications for the Series 5 'Classic'.

Modem - Modulator/demodulator. Device used to convert computer data to/from audible pulses that can be transmitted down a conventional telephone line. Required for Internet access from a palmtop.

netBook - Psion's 'vertical market' variant of the Series 7, with more memory and a faster processor. Featured in *Palmtop* issue 27.

Null modem adaptor - small box/connector used to connect two computers or devices such as a modem via an RS232 (Serial) cable by transposing the send/receive wires.

Object - Spreadsheets, Sketches, Sound files, etc. that are *embedded* within another EPOC document. See **embedding**.

OPL - Organiser Programming Language. The BASIC-like high level programming language built into most Psion devices.

OPX - An extension to OPL, providing extra functionality under EPOC.

Osaris - EPOC device produced by Oregon Scientific in 1999. The Osaris will not run many

EPOC programs due to its small (320x200 pixel) screen. Reviewed in *Palmtop* issue 24 and 26.

Palmtop CD - PC and Macintosh compatible CD-ROM supplied free with *Palmtop* magazine subscriptions and containing virtually all non-commercial Psion-related software ever produced.

Parallel link - Cable for connecting EPOC computers to standard Parallel (Centronics) sockets as found on most PC-compatible printers.

PC-Card adaptor - Psion adaptor to allow connection to PC-Card modems, etc. Reviewed in *Palmtop* issue 11.

PCMCIA Card - Now known simply as 'PC-Card'.

Pearl - New category of EPOC smart-phones, due for release in 2001.

Pixel - Term derived from 'picture element'. Refers to a single 'dot' on a computer screen.

POP3 - A common Internet mail protocol for downloading messages.

PsiMac - Psion's nearest Series 3 (SIBO) equivalent to PsiWin for the Apple Macintosh, but offering only backup, restore and software installation, plus Word and Sheet conversion.

Psion Organiser - Term coined with the appearance of Psion's first handheld 'organiser' device in 1984.

PsiWin - PC-based software that allows backup/restore, software installation, conversion of files and synchronization of certain data between Psion/EPOC devices and PCs.

Quartz - New category of EPOC devices featuring keyboardless operation, due for release next year.

RAM - Random Access Memory.

Revo - The Revo was introduced in late 1999 as a cut-down and compact Series 5-like machine, with a non-backlit screen and no memory expansion capability.

Revo Plus - Introduced in September 2000, with double the memory (16MB) of the original Revo, plus Psion WAP and Opera web browsers included on CD.

ROM - Read Only Memory.

RS232 - Long-standing serial communications standard used for cable connections between all Psion/EPOC devices and desktop computers.

RTF - Rich Text Format. A common word processor file format supported by many word processing programs, and built into Psion Series 3 devices as a standard saveable/readable format.

SDK - Software Development Kit. A set of tools used for programming.

Serial cable - See **RS232**.

Series 3 - The first range of Psion palmtops to feature a QWERTY keyboard. First introduced in 1991, later models were the 3a, 3c and 3mx, with the 3mx finally discontinued in late 1999.

Series 5 - The first Psion palmtops to feature the EPOC operating system, introduced in mid-1997. The original Series 5 was later dubbed the Series 5 'Classic'.

Series 5mx - Introduced in mid-1999 as a replacement to the original Series 5, with double the memory (16MB) and several software enhancements.

Series 7 - Introduced in late 1999 as a handheld/laptop hybrid, featuring colour screen and both CF and PC-Card expansion slots. Reviewed in *Palmtop* issue 25 and 27.

Shareware - Software that can be freely copied or downloaded for a fixed evaluation period, after which the software should be paid for. Shareware 'registration' fees generally range from £5-£25.

SIBO - Now refers to the operating system used by the Series 3 range of Psion palmtops. An acronym of 'SIngle Board Organiser'.

Siena - Introduced in 1996 as a cut down Series 3 device with a half-width screen and no memory expansion capabilities.

Silk-screen - The touch-sensitive area around the screen edge of EPOC devices, includes the menu, infrared, clipboard and zoom command icons.

SIS - Software Installation System. A means of installing software to an EPOC device via a single, self-extracting file.

SMS - Short Messaging Service. Used to send text messages up to 160 characters in length via the GSM telephone network.

SMTP - Simple Mail Transfer Protocol. A common Internet mail protocol for sending messages.

SSD - Solid State Disk. Proprietary storage 'card' devices used to expand the capacity of the Series 3 range of palmtops.

SSL - Secure Sockets Layer. A system of encryption for web pages, often used for web-based money transactions.

Symbian - A joint venture between Psion, Nokia, Ericsson, Motorola and other major telecommunications/computing companies to develop the EPOC standard and its derivatives.

System folder - A hidden folder present on all EPOC devices and containing numerous system settings/configuration files and all installed add-on software. See 'Inside the System folder' in *Palmtop* issue 28 for more details.

System screen - The equivalent of a PC 'desktop' on Psion/EPOC devices. Accessed from EPOC by tapping the 'System' silk-screen icon.

Toolbar - The strip of software buttons present down one side of the screen within most EPOC applications.

UID - Each EPOC application should have a unique identifier, which is a 32-bit number that software developers request from Symbian. Use of a UID ensures that files associated with the application are correctly recognised by EPOC.

Unique id - The unique serial number assigned to each individual EPOC machine. Can be found under 'Information | Machine...' from the System screen. Some software authors tie their registration codes to Unique id numbers, in an attempt to prevent unauthorised copying.

Upload - To transfer a file to an Internet web site or FTP site from your palmtop or desktop computer.

URL - Uniform Resource Locator. Essentially the unique address of an Internet web or FTP site.

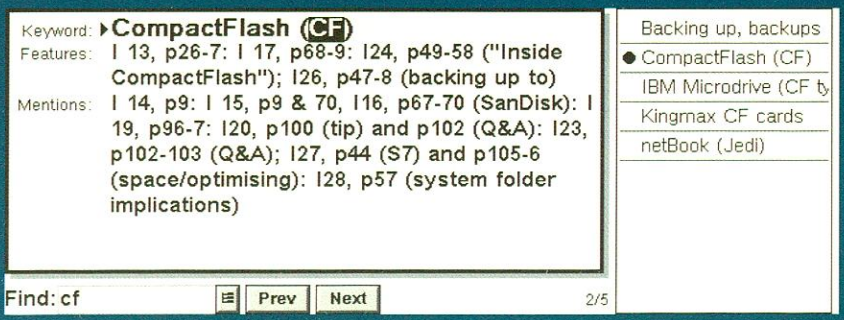
WAP - Wireless Application Protocol. A system for delivery of limited Internet content to handheld devices.

Web - Abbreviated form of 'World Wide Web', the graphical system of hypertext pages published on the Internet.

Zip - A compressed file format used widely on PCs and commonly adopted on Psion/EPOC devices.

DON'T FORGET THE PALMTOP INDEX!

For a more comprehensive list of article cross-references, see the Palmtop index, supplied on all Palmtop CDs, or freely downloadable from *www.palmtop.co.uk* .


Keyword: CompactFlash (CF)
Features: I 13, p26-7: I 17, p68-9: I24, p49-58 ("Inside CompactFlash"); I26, p47-8 (backing up to)
Mentions: I 14, p9: I 15, p9 & 70, I16, p67-70 (SanDisk): I 19, p96-7: I20, p100 (tip) and p102 (Q&A): I23, p102-103 (Q&A); I27, p44 (S7) and p105-6 (space/optimising): I28, p57 (system folder implications)
Backing up, backups
CompactFlash (CF)
IBM Microdrive (CF t
Kingmax CF cards
netBook (Jedi)
Find: cf
Prev
Next
2/5

Usenet Groups, etc.

comp.sys.psion.announce
comp.sys.psion.misc
comp.sys.psion.comm
comp.sys.psion.apps
comp.sys.psion.programmer
comp.sys.psion.marketplace
comp.sys.psion.reviews

These newsgroups are the unmoderated discussion groups on the Internet. It's easiest to access them via a desktop machine using Microsoft or Netscape web browsers (choose 'Read newsgroups' or similar on their menu), but there's now also a dedicated EPOC newsreader, RMRNews, which you can download from *www.rmrsoft.com* .

There are also digests, with daily messages sent by email. Subscribe at *www.pinkworks.com/pda/s5list.html* .

Linux users can find a Linux Psion mailing list at *linux-psion@geekstuff.co.uk* and more Psion-related information at *ftp://ftp.to.com/pub/psion* .

Proprietary discussion forums

AOL - Psion Noticeboard	Psion/General noticeboard - Keyword: Psion
CiX Psion conference	join psion join cixed

Psion-related software

3-Lib	*3lib.ukonline.co.uk*
CiX	'join psion', then look in '/files' and '/s5_files' file lists
EPOC Software	*www.epocsoftware.com*
Plus, of course, the Palmtop CD	See page 138.

Psion FAQ

The Series 3 and Series 5 Frequently Asked Questions documents contain useful information, facts, names, addresses and numbers:

www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/8130/faq.htm

Information

3 For All	*go.to/3forall*
3-Lib	*3lib.ukonline.co.uk*
Armlink	*www.armlink.ndirect.co.uk*
Palmtop magazine	*www.palmtop.co.uk*
PocketInfo	*www.pocketinfo.org*
Psion	*www.psion.com*
Symbian	*www.symbian.com*

News

EPOC City	*www.epoccity.com*
EPOC Zone	*www.epoczone.com*
PDA News	*news.tucows.com/pdanews*
Portal PDA	*www.portal-pda.com*
Widget News	*www.widget.com*

Software houses

Atelier	*www.ateliersoftware.com*
Beelogic	*www.beelogic.com*
Ben Vaughan Software	*www.bjv.btinternet.co.uk*
FreEPOC	*www.freepoc.de*
Neuon	*www.neuon.com*
Palmtime	*www.shoresystems.net/palmtime*
PalmTop Software	*www.palmtopsoftware.com*
PocketIQ	*www.pocketiq.com*
Purple Software	*www.purplesoft.com*
RMR Software	*www.rmrsoft.com*
Widget Software	*www.widget.co.uk*

Miscellaneous

Directory of software authors	*3lib.ukonline.co.uk/authors.htm*
FoxPop	*www.foxpop.ndirect.co.uk*
Go32	*www.go32.com*
Online with your Psion	*homepages.ihug.co.nz/~jochens*
Revoworld	*www.revoworld.com*

Search engines

Googol	*www.googol.net*
Psion Websearches	*psion.websearches.net*

Problems with your Psion?

Here are some useful guidelines if you think you may have a problem with your Psion palmtop:

Things to check

Before even thinking of picking up the phone, make sure you've checked the following, if only to save your own embarrassment if it turns out to be something easy to solve:

- Are the batteries OK? The Psion's own battery information option (from the System screen menu) will give you an indication of their health, otherwise you might want to invest in a cheap battery tester. If in doubt, replace them with brand new alkaline batteries. Note that rechargeable batteries have a much shorter life and do not always give accurate readings with the Psion's built-in battery checker.
- If the screen appears to be faulty, it could be that the contrast just needs adjusting. If set to minimum you will have a blank screen, whereas a maximum setting will give you an all-black screen. To adjust the contrast on a Series 3, hold down [Psion]+[.], on EPOC machines, it's [Fn]+[.]. If the touch screen is misbehaving, go into System's 'Control panel | Screen' and recalibrate.
- A common problem with the Series 5/5mx is a stuck stylus. To reset the mechanism, gently pull on the lip on the underside of the case, just below the RS-232 connector (or see *Palmtop* issue 15, page 86).
- Have you tried resetting the Psion? If it's still possible to back up the unit, do so again unless you already have a very recent backup. Then try a 'soft' reset. If that doesn't sort things out, try a 'hard' reset (see the manual for details on how to do this). If neither of these work, it's worth unhooking all cables, removing all the batteries (AAs *and* the backup cell) plus any SSD or CompactFlash, and leaving the unit for 30 minutes. Put the batteries back in and try again, restoring your data if the Psion comes back to life.

Checks complete, but the fault is still there?

If all the above advice fails to help, it's best to contact the experts. If outside the UK, you'll have to contact your local distributors for support options. You can find a list of worldwide service agents at *www.psion.com/international*. If within the UK, read on...

Machine repairs

If your machine has developed a hardware fault, you may find that your supplier (particularly if a High Street store) has an arrangement for replacing your faulty machine. However, most people get their units repaired either by Psion themselves or by POS Ltd. If your Psion is still covered by the 12-month warranty, you should definitely contact Psion. If it is older than a year then you have a choice, although prices are generally similar between the two.

Repairs by Psion

The Psion Repair Centre can be contacted by telephone on 0208 575 9919, or by email at *uk-repair@psion.com*

If in the UK, send the broken palmtop by Registered post or by courier, to:

Psion UK Repair Centre
Unit 6 Derby Road
Metropolitan Centre
Greenford
Middlesex UB6 8U

If using a Psion Enterprise product, such as a netBook, see *www.enterprise.psion.com/public/instruct.htm* for their current return procedure.

Psion *do not* guarantee to save data that may already be on your machine, so it is important to back up your data first if at all possible. You should remove the batteries (if your data is safe), stylus and SSDs/CFs. Package the machine securely, and enclose a covering letter describing the fault, remembering to supply a daytime phone number and return address.

Remember to keep a note of your machine's serial number, most commonly found beneath the SSD/CF disk door, as you may need to quote this if contacting Psion.

Attach some proof of purchase if you expect the repair to be under warranty. Psion will acknowledge receipt of the palmtop into their system, billing you if the repair is chargeable, and will usually return the fixed unit within about a week, by courier.

Repairs by POS Ltd

POS Ltd. offer a similar postal service, plus 'while you wait' repairs at their high street shop at 143 Streatham High Road, London SW16 6EG. Providing you've booked an appointment, repairs can generally be done on the spot in 1-2 hours.

Telephone POS Ltd. on 0208 677 9246 or see *www.posltd.com* for further details.

Technical support

If you have a software or operational problem, you may wish to contact Psion's Technical Support department. You can do this by email via their web site or, in the UK, call the premium rate support service on 0906 554 0000. See *www.psion.com/support/support_info.asp* for prices and other support options. Before calling, consult your manual, or the Support Knowledgebase at *www.psion.com/support* for answers to common questions.

Alternative support

As an alternative to Psion's own support, you may like to try either POS Ltd (details given above) or PalmtopMan, as advertised on page 136 of this issue.

Psion/EPOC models at a glance

Maker	Model	Year launched	Original price (inc VAT)	Memory	Operating system
Psion	Organiser I	1984	£99	2K	Psion
Psion	Organiser II CM	1986	£99	8K	Psion
Psion	Organiser II XP	1986	£139	16K/32K	Psion
Psion	Organiser II LZ	1988	£149/189	32K/64K	Psion
Psion	MC200	1989	£495	128K	SIBO
Psion	MC400/Word	1989	£695	256K	SIBO
Psion	MC600	1989	£1295	768K	DOS 3.2
Psion	Series 3	1991	£199/£249	128K/256K	SIBO
Psion	Series 3a	1993	£279/£329	256K/512K	SIBO
Psion	Series 3a	1995	£339/£399	1MB/2MB	SIBO
Psion	Workabout	1995	Various	Various	SIBO and custom
Psion	Series 3c	1996	£339/£399	1MB/2MB	SIBO
Psion	Siena	1996	£169/£229	512K/1MB	SIBO
Psion	Series 5	1997	£439/£499	4MB/8MB	EPOC
Geofox	Geofox One	1997	£385/£599	4MB/16MB	EPOC
Psion	Series 3mx	1998	£269	2MB	SIBO
Psion	Workabout mx	1998	Various	Various	SIBO and custom
Psion	Series 5mx	1999	£429	16MB	EPOC
Ericsson	MC218	1999	£479	16MB	EPOC
Oregon Scientific	Osaris	1999	£219/£279	4MB/8MB	EPOC
Psion	Series 7	1999	£699	16MB, upgradeable to 32MB	EPOC
Psion Enterprise	netBook	1999	£995	32MB, upgradeable to 64MB	EPOC
Psion	Revo	1999	£299	8MB	EPOC
Psion	Revo Plus / Diamond Mako	2000	£299	16MB	EPOC

	Processor type/speed	Screen	Expansion options	Infrared
		16-character single line	2 'datapak' slots	No
	HD6303X/0.92Mhz	16-character, 2 line	2 'datapak' slots	No
	HD6303X/0.92Mhz	16-character, 2 line	2 'datapak' slots	No
	HD6303X/0.92Mhz	20-character, 4 line	2 'datapak' slots	No
	80C86/7.68Mhz	640 x 200	4 SSD slots, one with upgradable OS	No
	80C86/7.68Mhz	640 x 400	4 SSD slots, one with upgradable OS	No
	80C86/7.68Mhz	640 x 200	1MB 'internal' disk, OS in flash RAM	No
	NEC V30/3.84Mhz	240 x 80	2 SSD slots	No
	NEC V30H/7.68Mhz	480 x 160	2 SSD slots	No
	NEC V30H/7.68Mhz	480 x 160	2 SSD slots	No
	NEC V30H/7.68Mhz	240 x 100 backlit	2 internal SSD slots	No
	NEC V30H/7.68Mhz	480 x 160 (later backlit)	2 SSD slots	Yes
	NEC V30H/7.68Mhz	240 x 160	External (optional) SSD drive	Yes
	ARM 710/18.43Mhz	640 x 240, backlit, touch sensitive	CompactFlash slot	Yes
	ARM 710/18.43Mhz	640 x 320, backlit	PC-Card slot	Yes
	NEC V30MX/27.68Mhz	480 x 160, backlit	2 SSD slots	Yes
	NEC V30MX/27.68Mhz	240 x 100 backlit	2 internal SSD slots	Yes
	ARM 710T/36.86Mhz	640 x 240, backlit, touch sensitive	CompactFlash slot	Yes
	ARM 710T/36.86Mhz	640 x 240, backlit, touch sensitive	CompactFlash slot	Yes
	CL-PS7111/18.43Mhz	320 x 200, backlit, touch sensitive	CompactFlash slot	Yes
	StrongArm SA-1100 /130Mhz	640 x 480 colour, backlit, touch sensitive	CompactFlash and PC-Card slots	Yes
	StrongArm SA-1100 /190Mhz	640 x 480 colour, backlit, touch sensitive	CompactFlash and PC-Card slots	Yes
	ARM 710T/36.86Mhz	480 x 160, touch sensitive	None	Yes
	ARM 710T/36.86Mhz	480 x 160, touch sensitive	None	Yes

Using the Palmtop CD-ROM

- **Windows** users who receive the CD should double-click on the file 'Start.htm'. On most PCs the web browser will leap into life and display the CD interface. If nothing happens, or if Windows asks how the file should be displayed, cancel the operation and install a 'web browser' application such as Microsoft Internet Explorer or Netscape (these can be found on almost all PC magazine cover CDs). After installation, try double-clicking on 'Start.htm' again.

  Please note that your operating system may set all files retrieved from the CD to 'Read-only'. This shouldn't cause a problem for 99% of applications, but you may have to manually change file properties (e.g. use [Control]+[P] on the EPOC machine) if you have problems with running or removing software.

  Those who install a new web browser should note that it often comes with its default start page set to the maker's web site, meaning that it tries to go online. Just go into its 'View|Options' dialog (or similar) and set the start page to a file local to your computer (e.g. the *Palmtop* CD Start.htm file).

- **Macintosh** users should simply drag the 'start.htm' file onto their web browser, where it will load the interface just as on a PC. Please note that PsiWin is designed to run on PCs, so it will not work directly on your Mac. Recent CDs also come with a Mac-specific start page.

- **DOS** and **Amiga** owners may be restricted in what they can view on the CD, but will still be able to browse the library section and copy off the software as needed.

- Users of **RISC OS** machines have had a few problems with the 'Joliet' format used on the Palmtop CD-ROM. Fortunately that has now been resolved, and users of those machines can now access all of the web sites on the CD without getting error messages (although they obviously won't be able to run any of the applications). All that's needed is a copy of Warm Silence Software's CDROMFS. For more details, contact Warm Silence Software Ltd, PO Box 28, Woodstock, Oxfordshire, OX20 1XX. tel: 0585 487642, fax: 01608 737172 or see their web site at *www.wss.co.uk*.

  RISC OS users will also find that the copy of the ArmLink web site on the CD contains PsiFS, a free application they can use to transfer files between their palmtop and desktop machines.

- **Linux** users should mount the CD on their computer and open their web browser on the 'Start.htm' file. PsiWin is of course designed to run on PCs, so will not work directly under Linux.

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Psion Revo (8MB) - £150, PalmTec case - £15, Palmtop Money and XConverter software - £10 each. Contact: Mike on 0797 4916167

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Psion Series 3c with screen fault (looks like cable) and Psiwin, 2MB flash SSD, mains adaptor, chrome desk stand, PalmTec case, PsiMail disk, Berlitz Phrase book SSD and Symantec ACT! SSD - £85 for the lot. Email: neilpetty@moorfield-dilham. demon.co.uk

Psion 5mx - £245.
Contact: John Wilson, or email: JWG_Wilson@compuserve.com

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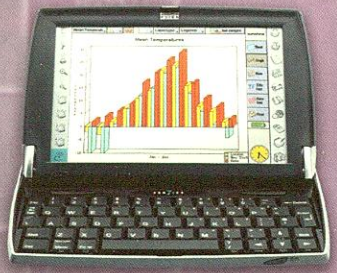

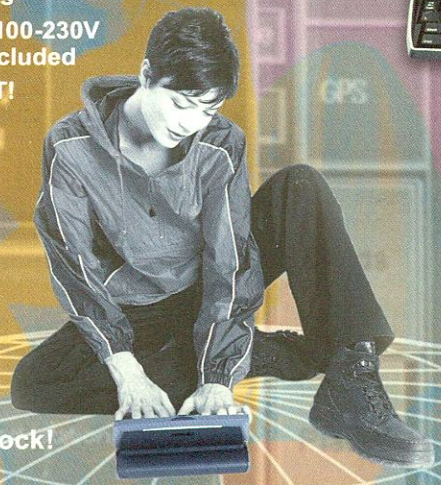

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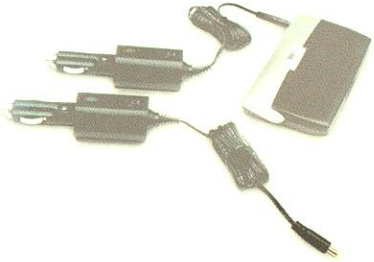

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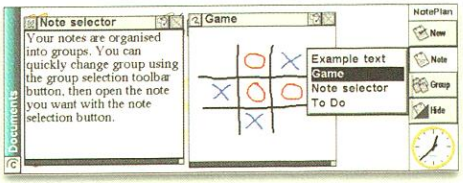

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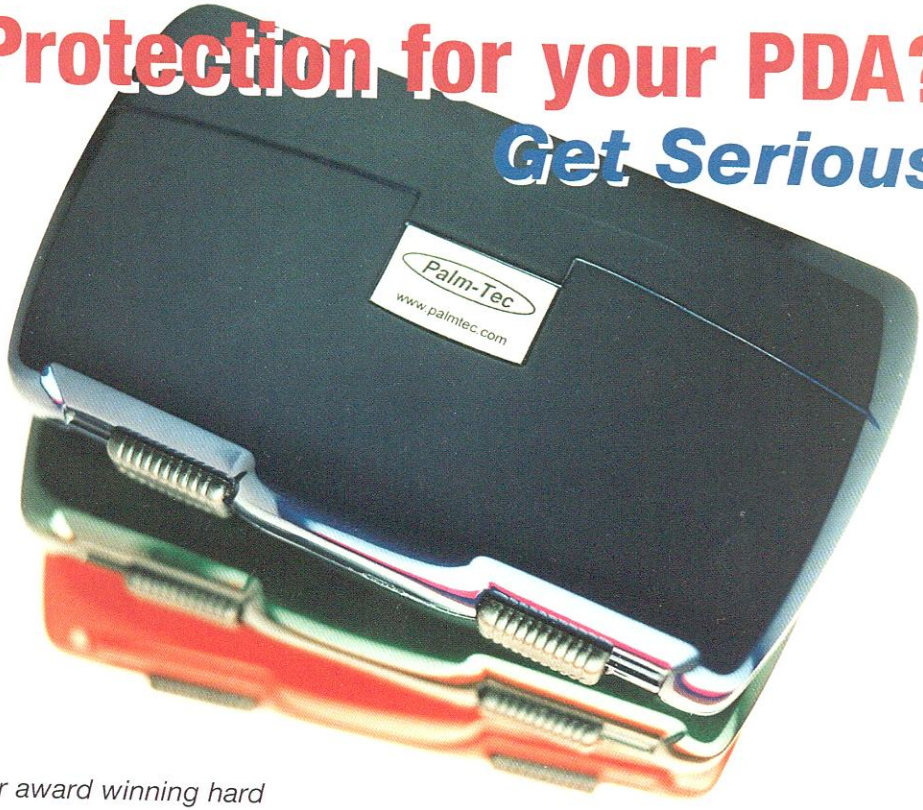

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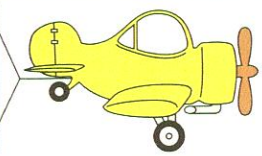

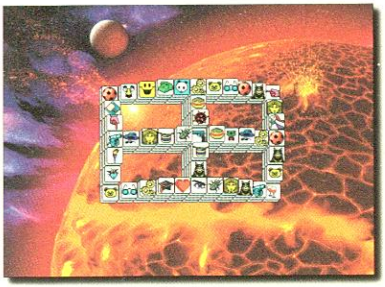

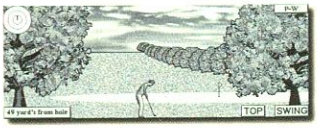

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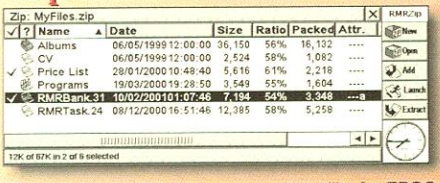

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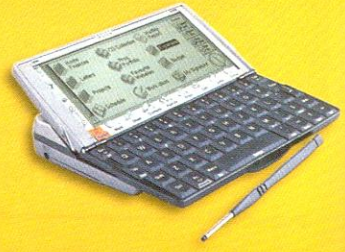

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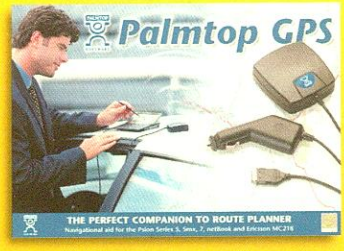

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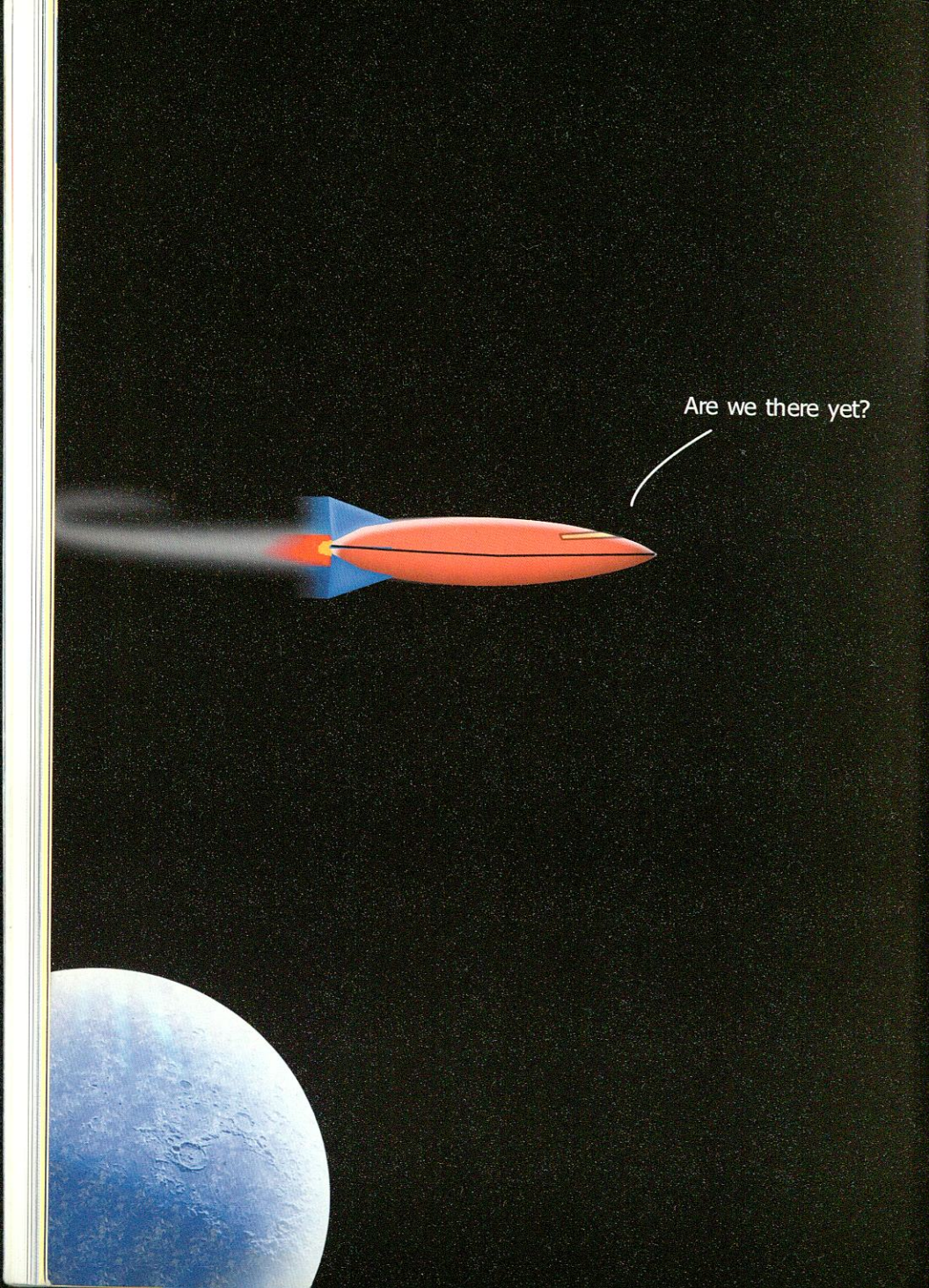
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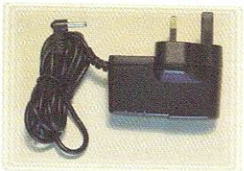

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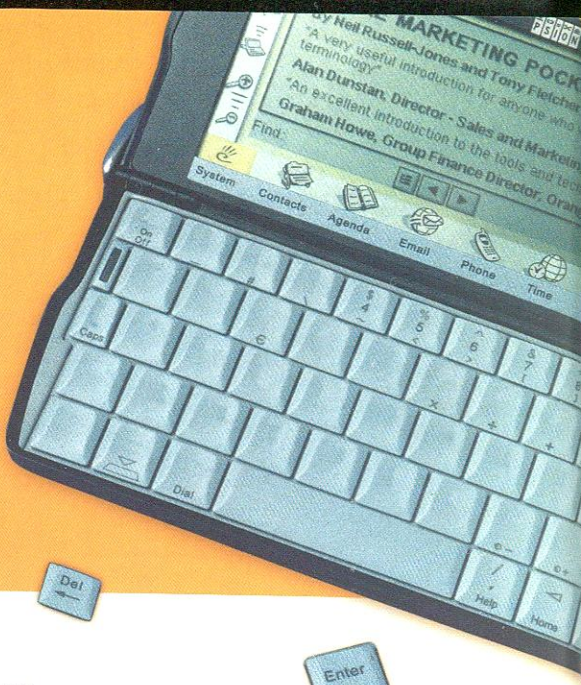

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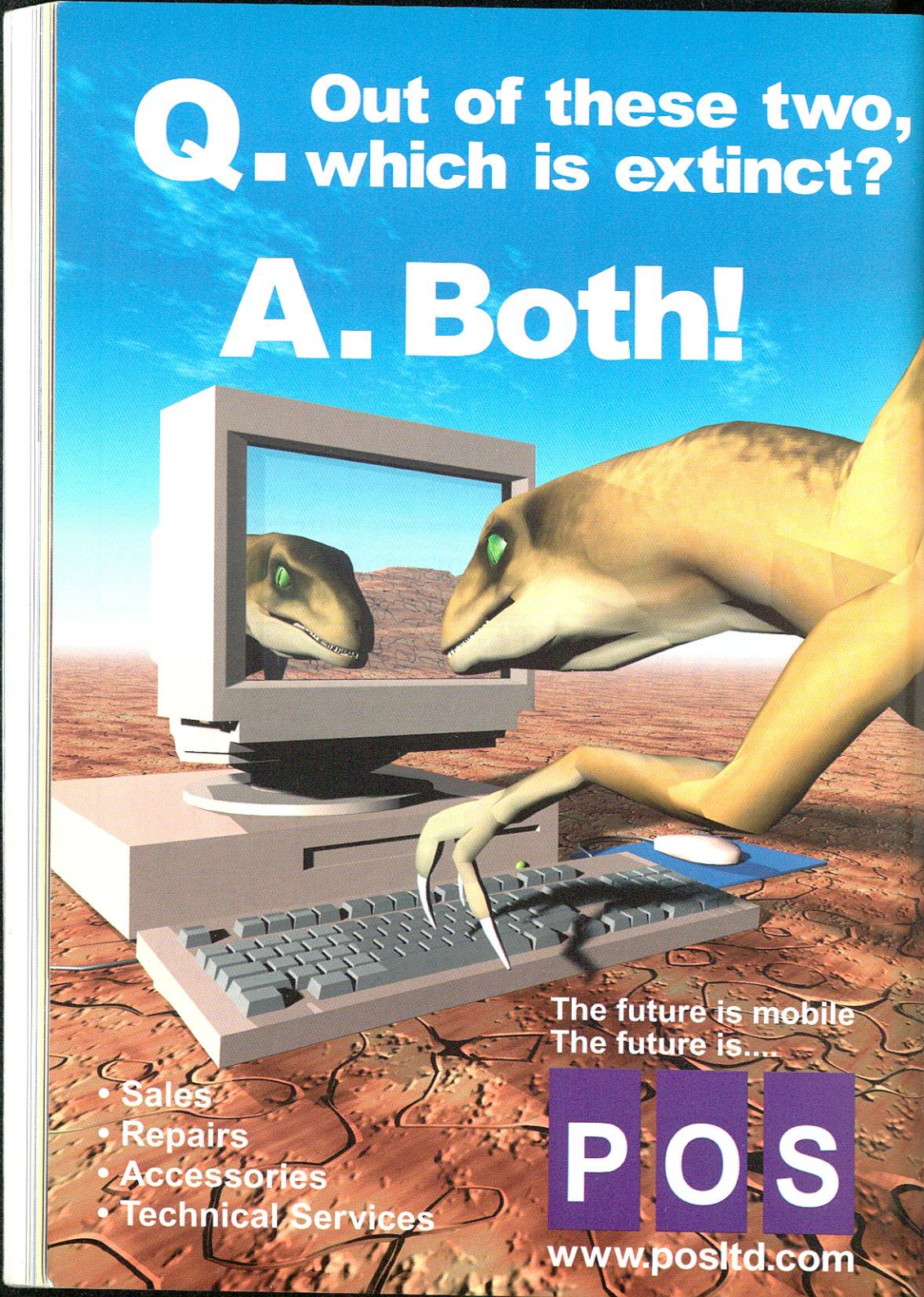
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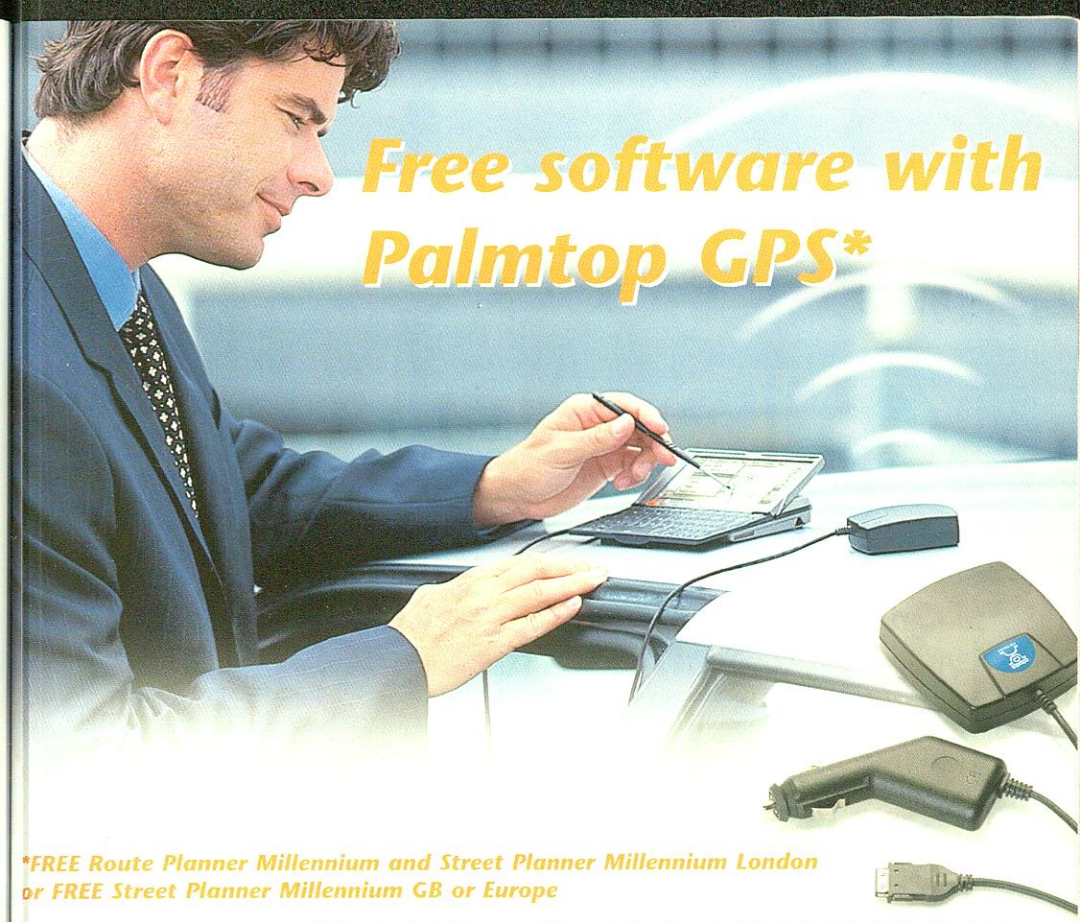

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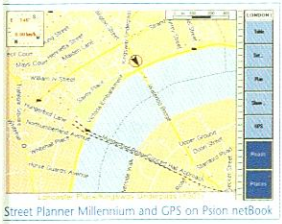

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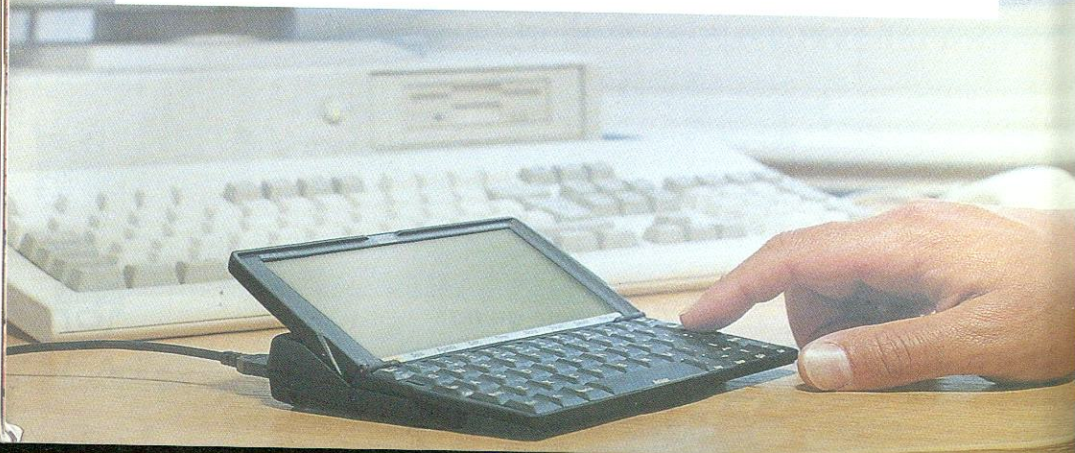

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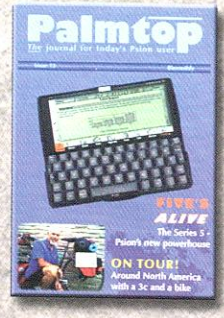
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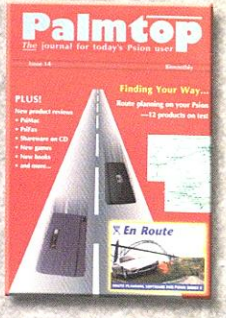

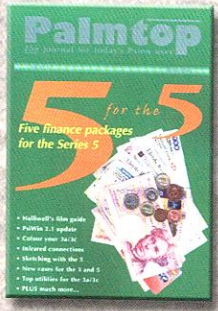
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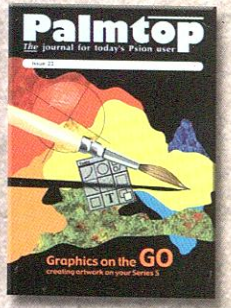

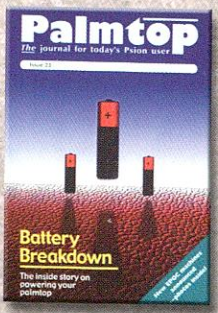

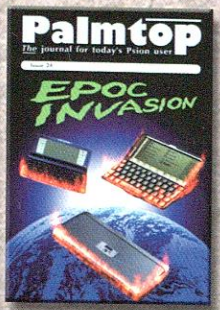

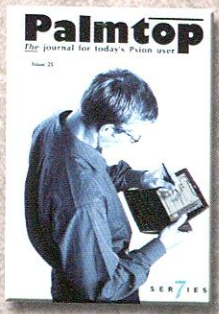

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Issue 16 - Portable Chef, Expense Manager, invoicing with your Psion, outlining, training courses...
Issue 17 - using Sketch, a roundup of EPOC finance packages, connecting to the Internet...
Issue 18 - Navigator, Essential Disk Utilities, managing a collection with Data, objects, memory...
Issue 19 - Series 5 PC emulator, connecting to the Internet, objects, working with Data...
Issue 20 - faxing with your Psion, the history of Psion, Internet connectivity, Series 3mx review...
Issue 21 - Powerbase, Plan5, Flight Manager, Workabout mx, connecting to a mobile phone...
Issue 22 - Notepad Deluxe, SimCity, Halliwell's, infrared, graphics software roundup, Agenda...
Issue 23 - Palm-Tec cases, printing from your Psion, ebooks for the Psion, battery roundup...
Issue 24 - Series 5mx review, inside CompactFlash, Ericsson MC218, Oregon Osaris, used Psions...
Issue 25 - Series 7, PsiWin 2.3, Pegasus II modem, synchronizing with a PC, Macro5, Java...
Issue 26 - Revo, Route Planner, Palmtop GPS, Collins Dictionary, backups, Mac connectivity...
Issue 27 - Psion infrared Travel modem, Street Planner Millennium, email, Jotter, Acrobat...
Issue 28 - File managers, inside the System folder, your Psion as a reference library, using Time...
Issue 29 - Data security, maximising the Revo, email in depth, Quartz preview, Word, Wap...
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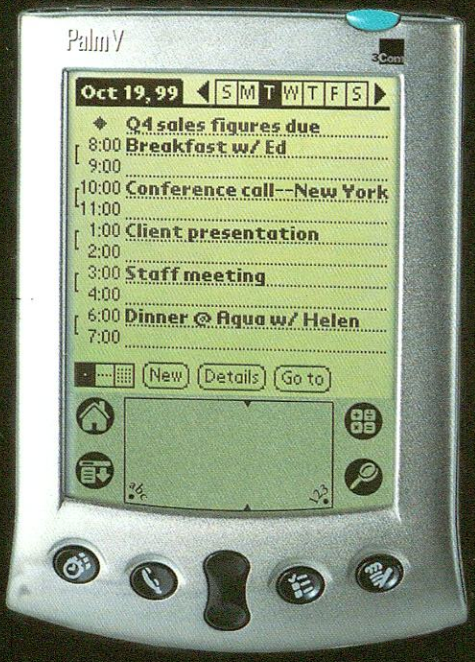

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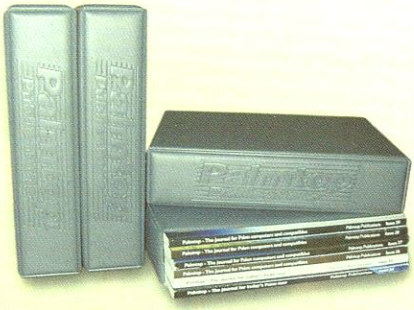

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- The Palmtop guide to Psion-friendly web resources
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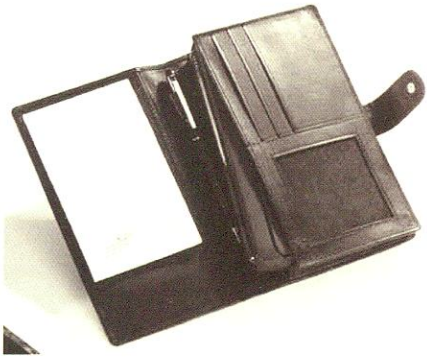

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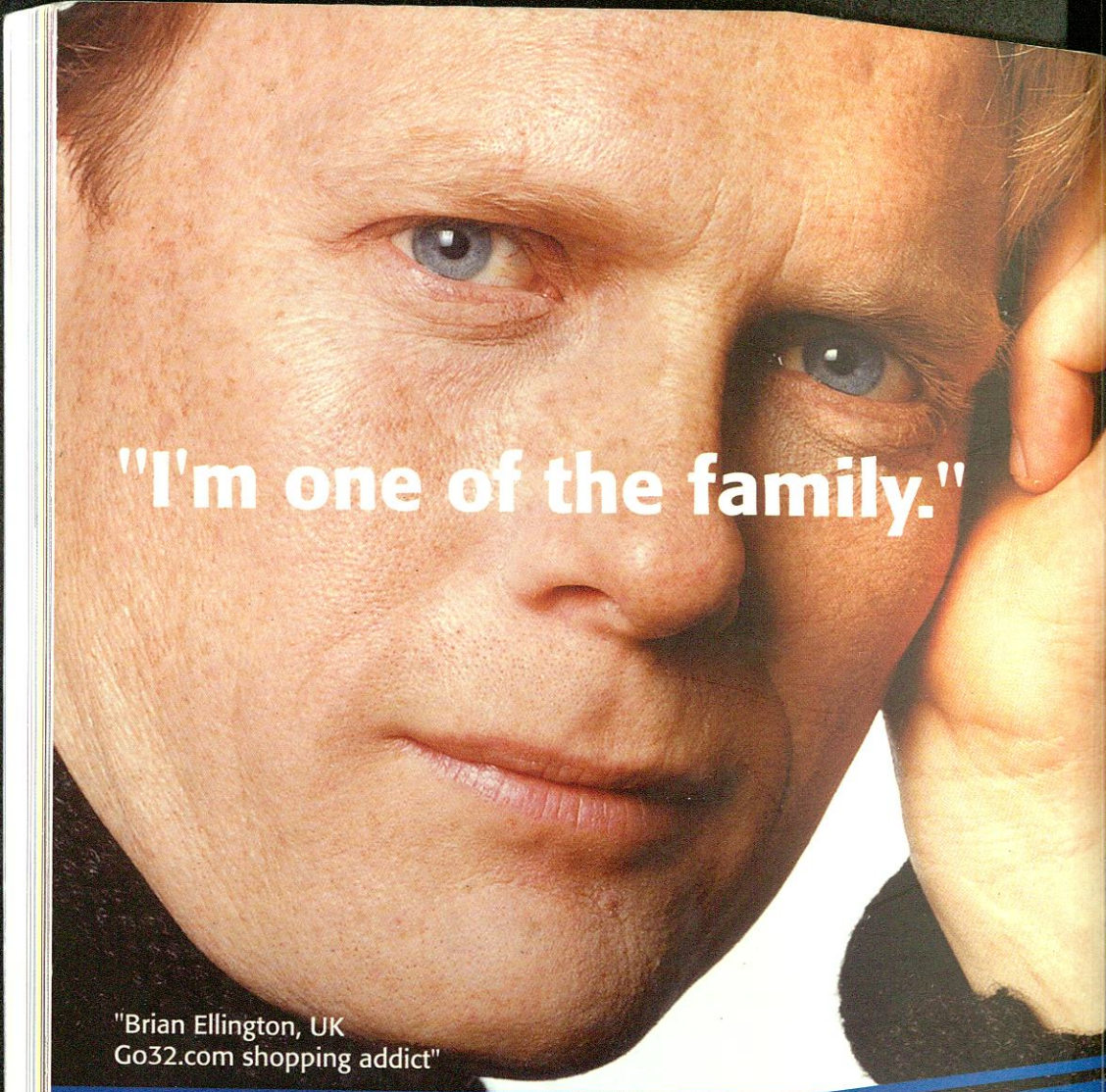

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